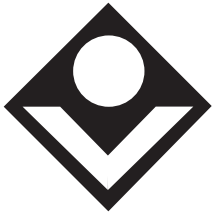
LITERATURE AND BELIEF

Edited by Edward S. Cutler



Literature and Belief
Volume 41.2 & 42.1

Faith and Imagination Institute

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

LITERATURE AND BELIEF
A semiannual publication of the Faith and Imagination Institute
College of Humanities, Brigham Young University

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Subscription cost is $10.00; $14.00 outside the USA. Address all correspondence, submissions, and subscription inquiries to *Literature and Belief*,
3184 JFSB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 (801) 422–3073

Vol. 41.2 & 42.1 2021 & 2022
 ISBN 0-939555-34-4

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Editor's Preface

This issue, my first as the editor of *Literature and Belief*, represents the range of religious and spiritual insight that has made our journal a unique academic home for more than forty years. From the early High-Church Anglicanism of George Herbert; the Southern-American Catholicism of Walker Percy; the biblical themes of Tennessee Williams; the progressive Protestant spirit of Rebecca Harding Davis and William Dean Howells; the mystical visions of Mary Rankin and the defiant Christian hospitality of one Theresa Corbett of Newfoundland, readers will here discover illuminating scholarship on figures familiar and new. Striking, original poetry and prose also grace these pages, along with new critical contexts for understanding a milestone achievement in Jewish Holocaust studies, and the developing tradition—and possible futures—of Mormon letters. I'm grateful to each of our contributors for their talents and their patience as this issue has come together.

Amid the permanence of excellent contributions to our journal, some changes correspond to my appointment as editor. Our new home is the Faith and Imagination Institute, which I will also lead. Since the fall of 1980 *Literature and Belief* has been the flagship publication of the Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature, when both journal and center were founded at Brigham Young University in the College of Humanities. Over the course of more than forty years, the center and the journal have served, reciprocally, to pursue an insight from Henry James cited in the founding document, namely, that "the moral element" is not something that can be "put into and kept out of a work of art . . . as if it were a colored fluid kept in a big-labelled bottle in some mysterious intellectual closet"—for James, "morality . . . is in reality simply a part of the essential richness of inspiration."[1] The journal and the Faith and Imagination Institute will continue along the path of the former center and in the spirit of

[1]See *French Poets and Novelists*, London, 1878, pp. 81–82.

James's observation, seeking to amplify morality, inspiration, belief, and value as integral rather than decorative, and as vital rather than incidental dimensions of art.

Over the years, an ecumenical aim of the former center's charter, "to encourage the reading and writing of quality literature that presents Christian values and themes," has come to feel inadequate to subsequent developments in the life of the center and the journal. We have formed lasting partnerships with scholars of Jewish literature, for instance, as recently exemplified in Victoria Aarons's terrific guest-edited issue on "Jewish Comics and Graphic Novels" (*LB* 40.2 & 41.1). We also increasingly publish articles and foresee special issues devoted to literatures of non-Christian faith traditions such as Islam or Buddhism, along with indigenous spiritualities, mysticism, and spiritually inflected writing outside of any denominational concern. Going forward as the Faith and Imagination Institute, we hope to represent the work we are doing and the horizon ahead more inclusively. For continuity, we will retain the title of *Literature and Belief*.

As we look to the future, I wish to express my deep gratitude to past directors of the Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature, whose devotion and talents maintained this enterprise over the decades. I'm grateful that Lance Larsen continues as poetry editor, and that our production editor, Jane Brady, continues with the journal and the work of the Faith and Imagination Institute. I welcome Matthew Wickman as associate editor of the journal and associate director of our new institute. I especially want to acknowledge my predecessor, Daniel K. Muhlestein, who has entered retirement most happily. He leaves behind him a generous legacy at Brigham Young University, where he is fondly remembered as a gifted, beloved teacher and mentor, an intelligent, perceptive scholar, and a wise, encouraging editor. I miss him. And I hope in the coming years to do credit to his example here.

—Edward S. Cutler

"I felt to praise God for it": The Power of Suffering in Mary Rankin's *Daughter of Affliction*

Robin L. Cadwallader
Saint Francis University of Pennsylvania

> "My only desire is that his purpose in me—whether that be to do or to suffer—may be fully accomplished."
>
> —Mary Rankin, *Daughter of Affliction*

The Daughter of Affliction: A Memoir of the Protracted Sufferings and Religious Experience of Miss Mary Rankin (1858, 1871)[1] is representative of one of the most popular literary genres of Rankin's day: the spiritual autobiography.[2] Emphasizing the spiritual conversion and religious enthusiasm of its author, Rankin's memoir

[1]Although not acknowledged by Rankin, the title of her book, *Daughter of Affliction*, seems to have been taken from Susanna Wesley's epitaph, written by her son Charles, whose brother John is noted as the founder of Methodism: "True daughter of affliction, she" (Wesley 5). First published in 1858, Rankin's text was so popular in Protestant religious circles that it went through two additional printings (1871, 1887), with one significant revision (1871) that doubled its length. All references in this essay are to my reprint of the 1871 edition.

[2]I provide an extended analysis of *Daughter of Affliction* as a spiritual autobiography in my 2014 reprint of Rankin's text (Cadwallader).

was intended, according to its first editor, Daniel Royer Good, to document the author's spiritual journey and to act as an inspiration for those who read it.[3] In its projected mission, Rankin's memoir becomes emblematic of the spiritual narratives written by those who were caught up in the evangelical religious enthusiasm of the time and an example of one of the few ways women could witness publicly in the nineteenth century.[4] However, moving beyond the traditional form and function of the spiritual autobiography, Rankin uses her text to link suffering and piety in ways that need to be examined through a different lens because those who hear her story today fail to see the importance of the author's "religious experience," focusing instead on her "protracted sufferings" and trying to diagnose medically the ailments and resulting treatments she details. In doing so, they always ask the same questions: *Who* was this woman? What was *wrong* with her? Was she *crazy*? Hearing such comments has led me to realize that we cannot understand the complexity of Rankin's religious conviction or extreme suffering from a distance and that we must turn to a practice much older than today's medical knowledge and/or nineteenth-century evangelicalism and revivalist rhetoric to interpret the deeper meaning of her lived experience. Indeed, if we are to appreciate the full impact of her work, we must read it through what William James calls the mystic tradition and consequent acts of heroic asceticism. In doing so, we will find that the basis of Rankin's memoir supersedes the spiritual narrative popular in her time as she embraces

[3]Good writes, "The only incentive that induces Miss Rankin to permit a memoir of her years of suffering to be presented to the public at this time, is a sense of duty which she feels she owes to God; and also to her fellow-creatures, by making known to them His all-sustaining power under the most trying and afflictive circumstances" (5). He quotes Rankin as having declared, "I saw my duty as I never had been able to do before. Jonah-like, I fain would have excused myself, but the waves of affliction were now beating against my bark. After much deliberation and earnest prayer, I was compelled from the fullness of my soul to cry out, 'I am willing, Lord,' to do, to be, or to suffer anything, only so Thy name be glorified" (5–6).

[4]Brereton maintains, "The spiritual narrative has been one of the forms of expression most available to ordinary American women over the past 350 years" (840).

the passion found in the much older rituals of religious suffering. Additionally, we will discover that her religious inflection of her physical suffering leads to her success as an author and offers her cultural power in her community.

While Rankin's memoir adroitly follows the form of the traditional spiritual narrative, the difference between her text and others lies in her emphasis on her "protracted sufferings" *following* her conversion, which receive as much attention throughout her story as her "religious experience." According to Yolanda Pierce, author of "African-American Women's Spiritual Narratives," "conversion most often happens during intense times of loss, grief, misery, pain, and despair, as both a psychological and physical reaction to conditions on earth" (244);[5] the suffering, she observes, ends following the conversion of the afflicted one. Rankin's memoir deviates from the pattern Pierce identifies because the author's suffering did not end with the conversion experience or lessen in its impact. Instead, readers find that her pre-conversion afflictions were few and covered only briefly in the early chapters of the memoir, almost as though they were not worthy of discussion or were being related simply as a backdrop for what was to come.[6] As the narrative continues, Rankin's suffering escalates to encompass every aspect of her post-conversion life and to involve her community as well as herself and her immediate family. Virginia Brereton, who provides a thorough overview of the nineteenth-century spiritual narrative, also notes the cessation of suffering after the conversion experience. "Once the conversion has taken place," she writes, "the narrator normally goes on

[5]I discuss this aspect of Rankin's life in my Afterword, emphasizing the young Mary's loss of her father to death and her remaining biological family to physical isolation. As a child of five, she had both a "psychological and physical reaction" to these "conditions," and her suffering was intense for one so young.

[6]Only two incidences of physical affliction occur prior to Rankin's conversion experience: full-body pain when she is five and is asked to do some cleaning for the woman caring for her and a brush with death when she chokes on a peach pit at the age of six. I contextualize these incidents later in this essay.

to tell about the consequences of conversion: greater peace and happiness and a desire to inspire others to the same experience" (840). Rankin's level of "peace and happiness" did become "greater" following her conversion experience, and as she grew in her faith, she clearly felt called upon "to inspire others to" the conversion experience, as seen in her reluctance to publish her story and then her capitulation to the task she acknowledges she was called to perform. Because her "protracted sufferings" did not decrease in frequency and power post-conversion, I suggest a new way of reading Rankin's testimony, one that leads to my identification of her as a mystic and ascetic.

Broadly defined, mysticism is the practice of intuitive—felt not learned—spirituality; it is "an experiential knowledge of God" (Harmless 5).[7] Following this line of thought, mystics are believed to have embraced the transcendent knowledge of an inner world more real than the outer one in which they lived; they saw visions, heard the voice of God, became one with God, and built close friendships in communities based on spiritual enlightenment.[8] Additionally, mystics believed they had been called to greater service than the average person, including asceticism and whatever else that calling may have demanded. "Early Christian mysticism," Ursula King contends, "developed in a context of sharing in Christ's Passion through martyrdom, which was followed by a strong emphasis on asceticism. . . . When Christianity became the official religion of the state in the fourth century, martyrdom was no longer necessary. Those who wished to practice the highest possible perfection opted for an ascetic

[7]Jean Gerson, according to Harmless, differentiated the knowledge of God as "experiential theology," or that learned in the heart through love, and "scholastic theology," or that learned in the mind through formal teaching (4–9). Gerson believed, Harmless argues, that both types of knowledge were viable and valuable; however, heart knowledge was preferable (6–7). The definitions of mysticism are numerous and vastly different. For more on mysticism and mystic traditions in Europe and the United States, see Fanning, Gerson, Harmless (3–18), James, Jantzen, King, Szarmach, and Underhill.

[8]Harmless summarizes William James's belief that "mystical experiences are brief, lasting no longer than an hour, usually less . . . [and] that mystics come to their peak experiences not as active seekers, but as passive recipients" (13). Finally, James observed, "the range of mystical experience is very wide" (202).

life" (16–17). Traditionally, Christian mystics and ascetics relied on feeling rather than thought, on emotional rather than intellectual responses to God. Such a shift in the religious experience, Barbara J. Berg notes, occurred in the United States during the Second Great Awakening (c. 1790–1840), coinciding with and influencing, I would point out, Rankin's response to her early affliction and subsequent conversion. Berg contends, "Religious excitement waxed and waned in the early 1800s, reaching a crescendo between 1825 and 1837. . . . Revivalism had a powerful appeal: theology became subordinate to faith; Christian behavior and conduct all but assured salvation; camp meetings imparted a sense of urgency to their participants" (34).[9] As we can see from these descriptions, the two worlds—that of the mystic and that of the Protestant evangel—are not as remote from each other as they may seem to us today.

Arguing for a kinship among women mystics of various times and diverse places, Carol Lee Flinders, using the words of Mechthild of Magdeburg, a thirteenth-century German mystic, posits that all humans experience a soul hunger that can be satisfied by "nothing short of 'the fullness of God'"; she claims that this assumption "hints at the rich possibilities of dialogue between women—no matter what their historical context—who know something of 'the wilder, more insistent hungers'" (xii).[10] The "wild excesses, the plain *weirdness*

[9]Rankin looked forward to camp meetings and attended them as often as her health allowed. She also was well versed in the hymns of the day, quoting from many of them in her memoir. See my reprint of *Daughter of Affliction*, which contains the words to the numerous hymns Rankin references. Both camp meetings and hymn singing are important aspects of evangelicalism and the evangelical movement in their ability to invoke emotional responses among followers.

[10]Prior to Flinders, William James, who believed "the terms mystical and mysticism were too loosely used" (Harmless 13), promoted the idea that mystics share a common experience across geographical and theological boundaries: "In mystic states," he wrote, "we become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our own oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed" (217). Citing Underhill's treatise on mysticism and her support of James's theory, Harmless explains, "This sunny universalism still flourishes.

that crops up in [the] lives [of women mystics]," Flinders argues, "are really the equivalent of *regional usages*" (xviii; emphasis added). "As a rule," she continues, "the greater understanding we have of the times and places in which our subjects lived, the less likely we will be to make superficial, inaccurate assessments" (xviii–xix).[11] Likewise, Grace M. Jantzen suggests "that the idea of 'mysticism' is a social construction, and that it has been constructed in different ways at different times" (12). James identifies language as another of the problems that must be surmounted when interpreting mystical texts. The mystical experience, he declares, "defies expression. . . . [N]o adequate report of its content can be given in words" (201). Flinders clarifies, "Recognizing that the mystical experience is inherently beyond words, mystical writers understand that the verbal constructs they use to convey it are approximations" (xxi). Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff agrees, posing the questions, "[H]ow can we put into words what is beyond language, and how can we understand the language in which mystical

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From the late nineteenth century until the 1970s, it reigned as a sort of scholarly orthodoxy" (159).

[11]Tracing this bond across centuries, readers find that Flinders, in describing her interest in women mystics and her early lack of connection to spiritual intercession, attended, as did Rankin a hundred years before her, a "rural Presbyterian church where [she] . . . got the idea that [she was] expected to lay [her] case directly before [her] maker—in person, or not at all" (xii). Her resulting feelings were of emptiness, "of confusion, despair, or inadequacy," of an unexplained hunger (xiii). This emptiness was relieved for Flinders when she attended a lecture on meditation and began meditating and studying the lives of the women mystics (xiv). Following her father's death and her separation from her family, Rankin's emptiness was alleviated by the communion sermon she heard at the age of ten in a rural Presbyterian church, but due to a lack of "spiritual nourishment," she soon "partially, though never entirely, lost what [she] had experienced" (20). Her emptiness was assuaged once again when she was fifteen and had her second awakening, this time in the Brethren church. In the end, as Rankin makes clear, fulfillment for her was not the result of one religious experience but was a continual nurturance that occurred over time through her personal relationship with God.

experiences were often expressed?" (4). Indeed, language becomes its own barrier to interpreting the mystical experience, as Rankin notes: "I have no suitable language to describe the glories of that place which mortal eye hath not seen, or heard, and which have never entered into the heart of man to conceive" (27). In the end, because mysticism transcends physical boundaries and mystics employ "regional usages" and paradoxical language in the creation of their texts, we must consider the time and place in which the mystic lived, in addition to the language used, as we interpret the mystic's work or we risk "mak[ing] superficial, inaccurate assessments." Additionally, I contend, mystic traditions can be observed as wide-ranging—theologically, chronologically, geographically, and linguistically—but the similarities detected can be used to expand the interpretations of works by writers, such as Rankin, not identified as mystics.

I am suggesting, then, that with a more open definition of "mysticism" and "mystic," perhaps one drawn from that presented by Steven Fanning,[12] we can better understand the power of Rankin's *Protracted Sufferings and Religious Experience*, the subtitle of her work; we can apply what we know of mysticism and mystic practices, positioning Rankin's memoir in a broader religious tradition than that of nineteenth-century Protestantism, which is generally used as the sole basis of interpretation for spiritual narratives. Here I must point out that Rankin, unlike the mystics traditionally recognized by scholars, never claimed to have had visions[13] or actually to have heard the voice of

[12]Fanning, linking British and American mystics, identifies Nathan Cole (1711–1783), Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), Sarah Pierpont Edwards (1710–1758), and Joseph Smith (1805–1844) as American mystics; see "American Protestant Mysticism," a section of his Mystics of the Christian Tradition (190–202). I propose that Fanning's alliance creates an even stronger argument for studying Rankin's text through the various characteristics of mystical traditions.

[13]Rankin had "dreams" and fell into "dream states." Mystics are said to have had "visions." The difference in the two words, I would argue, is one of semantics. The deeper meaning in usage seems to be the same: they entered into a special perceptual awareness of life led by the Holy Spirit or a spiritual guide.

God in a physical sense, but, displaying an "affective piety," she does recount several episodes where she "felt" God and entered into his presence.[14] Two of these are worth examining in this essay.

The first, referred to by Rankin as a dream, occurs shortly after her conversion and before the death of her oldest sister. "I had [a dream] about this time that made a deep impression upon my mind and feelings," she writes:

> I dreamed that my eldest sister . . . and myself were walking in a beautiful garden bedecked with fruits and flowers. As we walked side by side we conversed about the beauties of the place, until we neared a mansion which stood in its midst. As we approached it she preceded me, and gained its portals first. I continued to follow her. After having crossed the threshold I beheld a being in bright and flowing robes, which she approached, and was received by it with outstretched arms, and the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord." I wept at the thought of being separated from her, and besought the being in shining robes not to take her, or else to take me also, as I did not wish to be left here without my sister's company. The response was, "*Not* NOW, but if faithful, I will come for you at another time." (22–23)

This episode is important to my argument for several reasons. First, it ties Rankin to mysticism through the mystics' familiarity with trance-like states: Rankin does not specify whether her "dream" occurred while she was awake or asleep, but most readers will assume she was asleep. I, however, believe she could have been having a waking dream, or what Flinders refers to as a "dream-vision,"[15] a

[14]Flinders defines "affective piety" as "the use of highly charged, emotional language and imagery to describe one's spiritual experience" or a "mysticism of the heart" (4).

[15]Flinders uses the combined "dream-vision" rather than dream or vision when referring to any of the mystics' reveries; Fanning uses the term "dream visions" and "visions in dreams." I prefer the hyphenated noun "dream-vision," believing it identifies a unified experience rather than a

vision experienced in a trance-like state. Second, Rankin claims, as other mystics have, to have seen a being—an it, neither male nor female—who speaks to her in the dream-vision: God often appears in mystics' visions as a form or a shape, as a woman, or as an essence. Thus, while Rankin does not claim to have physically heard His voice, God does speak to her. Third, Rankin's dream-vision echoes the mystics' love of and closeness to nature, something Rankin writes of often and to which I will return later. And, fourth, the experience changes her: The result, she reports, was that she "appeared to have entered into a new state of being" (23). For mystics, to experience God is not just to know "a being" but to know "a state of being." To make sure readers are aware of her "new state of being," Rankin announces, "My thoughts, my feelings, and my desires were of heaven and heavenly things. I cared nothing for the company of my former worldly associates of whom I used to be so very fond. My chief delight was in reading, meditation, prayer, and attendance on the means of grace" (23).

The second vision, instigated by one of her extreme bouts of illness, brought her freedom from the fear of death. "Having called earnestly and fervently upon God to deliver me from these tormenting fears and doubts," she remembers, "the darkness that enshrouded me was dispelled; the fear that hath torment fled away; the curtain of time seemed to be drawn aside; and heaven appeared in full view,—not as before, at a distance, but as though it were but a step from the visible to the invisible world" (26). This dream-vision, forging one more link in the bond between Rankin and other women mystics, reflects the mystical premise that there is an inner/other world more real than the physical one in which we live.

Even so, the physical world does have its place for mystics, who "often perceive the presence of God throughout the world of nature and in all that is alive, leading to a transfiguration of the ordinary all around them" (King 3). Although most mystics connect nature

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dream that is interpreted as an adjectival descriptor or a vision experienced in a dream.

to God in some way, nature becomes God for some. For example, Fanning notes that Lutheran mystic Jacob Boehme (1575–1624) "could express the way that God was written into all of nature" (146). And, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), whom Fanning also identifies as a mystic, "found nature to be a source of spiritual experiences. . . . [I]n nature . . . [he] found his image for the soul of a true Christian" (194). Rankin's perception of God and nature as presented in her prose and poetry is clearly another aspect of her spirituality that cries out to be read as part of a mystic tradition. "I took great delight in beholding the grand sceneries of Nature, and studying her laws," Rankin writes, "and instead of leading my mind away from God, they had a tendency to bring me nearer to him" (45).[16] Applying this philosophy to her study of a bouquet of flowers, Rankin declares,

> And while I gazed admiringly upon them they seemed to address me as follows: "Thou beholdest our beauty and inhalest our perfume, and art regaled; why then art thou sad and repining? We, too, have been removed from our native position that thou mightest be delighted with our beauty and regaled by our fragrance. We have cheered thee on thy journey to the tomb. From us, therefore, learn to glorify God in thy afflictions." (46)

As it did for the earlier mystics, the comfort Rankin draws from these flowers, which remind her of God's divine plan for her, sustains her as she waits for her "destiny [to be] fulfilled" (46). Later, after having been relieved somewhat of her "protracted sufferings," she remarks,

[16]Rankin's acknowledgment of God in nature and nature as God is clear throughout her work, in which she includes numerous reflections on nature in general and in poetic form, specifically to flowers and trees, twilight, and a unique rock formation. See, for example, "The Culled Rose" (76–77), a poem drawn from her "Delight of contemplating flowers" (74–75); "Thoughts suggested by an evergreen" (96–97), which inspired the poem "Friendship's Flower" (97–98); "Twilight" (296–97); and "View of the Pulpit Rocks in Winter" (114–15), an emotional response to a snowy outing along a secluded back road in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania.

"Imagine the joy and gratitude I felt, after being confined so long to my bed, to be able once more to walk to the door and behold the beauties of nature,—to behold the sun, the moon, and the stars" (63). Being early evening,

> [t]he sun had just 'veiled his radiant beams in sable shade,' and as I sat silently musing, behold! from beneath the horizon of the silver-fringed east, the queen of the night, accompanied by her myriads of shining attendants, burst into view. Oh, how beautiful! how sublime and soul-inspiring. . . . But lo! scarcely had she extricated herself from the chaos beyond, when her radiant face gradually hid itself in the deep shade of another world. (63–64)

The full spectacle she recalls seeing—an eclipse of the moon[17]—causes her to feel, in her own words, "[T]hough shut in from the world, and doomed by the hand of destiny to suffer, yet I was not alone" (64).

The depths of Rankin's suffering and her association of God with nature are vividly represented in her poetry. Perhaps not deemed to be good by today's literary standards, these outpourings, reflections of mid-nineteenth-century sentimentalism, can best be read as the emotional expression of a soul moved by the Holy Spirit. In "The Culled Rose," which she "inscribed to D. R. Good, M. D.," her doctor and amanuensis,[18] Rankin plots her submission to God's plan for her and asks that the virtues of her life be recognized by her friends after she is dead:

> Like the rose, I will bow to the will that's divine;
> And ne'er at His providence may I repine.
> Oh, let such be my life that when it has fled
> Its virtues may live when I sleep in my bed. (77)

[17]Rankin provides the following note on this experience: "The moon was undergoing an eclipse" (64).
[18]See Coakley for more on women saints and the men who supported them.

The best of the poems, influenced by a carriage ride over Warrior Ridge, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, on a snowy day in 1855, "The Pulpit Rocks" reveals Rankin's sense of the mystic "awe" of God in nature:

> The chime of the sleigh-bells grew suddenly still,
> And a feeling of awe my spirit did fill,
> As I listened in silence to the eloquent strain,
> Which nature sends forth from that rocky terrain. (115)

The "strain" sent forth from the rocks is not just any sound of nature; it is a personal message to Rankin from God:

> A low murmuring breeze, like an audible voice
> From the midst of the pulpits, now seemed to rejoice
> In Him, who hath said, ye winds ever blow
> A mystery to man, who thy pathway would know. (115)

Assuming the sentimental voice of the nineteenth-century domestic poet, Rankin translates her "protracted sufferings" and personal encounters with the natural world into verses that encompass the mystic joining of God and nature in such a way as to make it clear to her readers that nature speaks to her as the voice of God.

While felt religion, dream-visions, and actualizing God in nature are important markers in situating Rankin within a mystic tradition, the significance of her "prolonged sufferings" can be understood best as heroic asceticism. Making the connection between mysticism and asceticism, Monica Furlong reminds readers that many mystics suffered with "severe and disabling illnesses that frequently prostrated them for long periods" (24):

> Hildegard suffered from illness of a migrainous type for most of her life, often being unable to move for days at a time. . . . [S]he was 'troubled by continual pain in all her veins, marrow and flesh.' . . . Everything affects her condition—'the air itself, from the wind, from the rain, from every sort of weather'; Clare was

> bedridden most of her adult life; Mechthild . . . 'was never but tired, ill and weak'; Julian's visions began in an illness in which she hung between life and death. (25)

Following in the footsteps of these female mystics, though she probably knew nothing of mysticism or a mystic tradition, Rankin never married (hence the *Miss Mary Rankin* of her subtitle), refused to drink wine (even as anesthesia for the amputation of her leg), and suffered extreme physical afflictions (so numerous as to be unquantifiable). Through a meticulous recitation of her many ailments during her lifetime, Rankin begs readers to go beyond a basic Protestant understanding of the connection between suffering and religion found in recognizable spiritual narratives, where suffering ends with the conversion experience. To do so, readers must navigate the twists and turns of her narrative to uncover the power of suffering for Rankin, which Furlong observes in the feminine ascetics she studies:

> Helplessness, shame, and obscure guilt become bearable through identifying with powerful persons and being in submission to them (therefore, in a sense, sharing in their power). . . . This seems a likely device for women in medieval (and many other) times, and perhaps the quality of helplessness and woundedness in the Crucifixion itself strengthened its appeal for women, suggesting that their own unwanted condition was written into the very fabric of human existence. (29)

Throughout her narrative, Rankin emphasizes her "helplessness" and "obscure guilt." She constantly identifies with "powerful persons" in her community as a way to both give credence to her suffering and to elevate her own position among those who know her.[19]

[19]Rankin's supporters are among the most prestigious and powerful people in the Yellow Springs community: the ironmaster and his family, the innkeeper and his family, doctors and landowners. She name-drops throughout her memoir, perhaps as a way to pay homage to the good people who had supported her in her suffering or maybe as a way to prove her value in the community. Indeed, to apply Fanning's idea, in connecting herself to them, Rankin was

As Rankin plays and replays the Passion of Christ, she repeatedly takes on the suffering she believes is given to her by God as a test of her worthiness and through which she must become an example to her community of God's love and care.

As a child, pre-conversion, Rankin suffered an unexpressed helplessness and guilt over her father's death, mother's illness, and the consequent separation of herself from her immediate family. Early in her narrative, she announces, "Although so young, yet when caressed by kind and sympathizing friends, and tenderly called 'a poor little orphan,' . . . I wished, in my childish simplicity, they would not call me by that name" (13–14). She later claims that through these early experiences she learns the power of submission, as well as the authority to be found in affliction. At five, confused and alone, Rankin was sent to live with others while all the members of her family—one by one—succumbed to a fever that was sweeping through the area. During this time, she recalls being asked by the woman who was caring for her to assist her own young daughter in scouring some stair-rods, an activity that instigates her first bout of unexplainable pain. Rankin relates her response to the situation this way:

> At first we were delighted with our task. But soon after, I commenced weeping; and they, supposing that I did not wish to perform the work assigned us, kindly remarked that I need not proceed if I did not wish to. I told them that I wished to, but said it hurt me to scour them,—and yet I could not tell in what way it affected me. . . . [I]n after years, I remember that the same grating noise, caused by the same process, produced a burning, uneasy sensation. (24–25)

About a year later, and probably while in the care of the same woman, Rankin suffered an incident in which a peach pit became lodged in her throat and "all around became dark from the strangulation" (14).

"sharing in their power" and creating a place for herself within the community.

From the time she was five and experienced what appears to be an extreme nerve pain as she attempted to scrub the stair-rods, suffering brought Rankin attention and power, the power to free herself from a situation she, then a child, could neither understand nor change. "[I]n its origins," Furlong insists, "masochism so often seems to be the psychological resource of those who feel weak (children, for example) and who are painfully stressed by the power of others" (29). Rankin's "masochism" may not be clearly evident at this time, but it will become obvious later as she matures as an ascetic. However, to read her suffering as only masochistic takes away from the spiritual underpinnings of Rankin's afflictions and her subsequent submission to God's will, as well as the resulting power she developed in her community. As a heroic ascetic, Rankin embraced the pain inherent in the "helplessness and woundedness in the Crucifixion," claiming her authority in her community through her suffering. In her personal Passion Play, her suffering is not for herself alone, but for her entire community, for those who are believers in Christ.

Again, *pre-*conversion suffering is not uncommon in spiritual narratives. What is uncommon, and what becomes heroic asceticism, is Rankin's increased and continual suffering post-conversion. In June 1836, at the age of fifteen, Rankin experienced an "injury" that she attributes to her awakening in the spirit: "I received an injury by running a white thorn in my foot, which, although it ruined my health, and resulted in the amputation of my limb, must be regarded as the external means of separating my heart fully from the world, and uniting it to Christ" (19). Shortly after this event, she feels a "desire to become a member of some branch of God's visible church" and joins a United Brethren congregation (21). As noted earlier, Rankin's conversion should have ended her suffering and affliction, but it does not. In fact, readers have only just begun chapter two of the narrative at this point, and the white thorn injury that caused Rankin's "foot and limb . . . [to] become quite contracted" only hints at the suffering to come (25). Through the next six chapters of part one, three chapters of part two, and eight chapters of part three, Rankin adds numerous ailments to her list of afflictions beyond the amputation of the limb that suffered the injury (37–39). In just part one of

her narrative, she endures "inflammatory disease" (27); "inflammation of the spine" (28); "inflammation and enlargement of the liver" and full body spasms caused by the slightest noise (31); "partial paralysis" and "nervous irritability" (31–32); "syncope" (40); "catarrhal fever and inflammation of the lungs" (43); arsenic poisoning (43–44); "dysentery" and "catarrhal fever" (61); sunburn and "vomiting" (65); "whooping cough" and "scarlet fever" (67); fainting spells (69); "chronic inflammation of the liver" (73); melancholia (74); "acute inflammation of the liver" and abscess of the liver (77); "effusion of serum, or a dropsical affection of the chest" (79); full-system "inflammatory condition" (81); "congestion of the lungs," "neuralgia in [the] head, face, and neck," and lightheadedness (82); "neuralgia and inflammation of the tonsils" (101); "inflammation of the stomach" (119); full body numbness affecting hearing and sight (120); "prostration, and a sense of numbness, which pervaded [the] entire system" (123); liver abscess, gallstones, inflammation of the nervous system (124); loss of hearing (125); and finally, gallstones and discharge from the liver (127). The preceding list of bodily afflictions is provided to show the extremes of suffering Rankin endured. In fact, her suffering became so great at times that everyone around her, doctors included, believed she was about to die; Rankin herself prayed many times for her suffering to be relieved through death. However, even as she prayed for her death to be imminent, she never failed to assert her submission to God's will, declaring about her suffering, "[I]nstead of murmuring, I felt to praise God for it" (126).

Due to the complexity of her afflictions, Rankin received treatment from numerous doctors, local and more widely known. For the thorn in her toe, one physician prescribed a medication, which she took, "but in a short time after taking [it], [she] became permanently confined to [her] bed, where [she] remained for ten long and weary years" (25). Other procedures and treatments included "blistering, cupping, scarifying, cauterizing, and setons, of which . . . no less than ten [were introduced] along the region of the spine" (28); "mercurial medicines" (31); opiates (32); cauterization of the white-thorn affected toe (33–34); amputation of the leg attached to the affected toe (37–39); a galvanic battery (46); more cupping (51); tonic medicines

(53); an ill-fitting artificial limb (62); lancing of the tonsils (68–69); probe and cannula (drain) for liver abscess (79); hart shorn, ammonia, and seton (80–81); creosote (120); as well as "ether and chloroform" (126). While all of the treatments she endured seem to be masochistic and at times simply inhumane to readers today, suffering was simply an aspect of the life Rankin felt she had been called to live, and allowing the doctors to experiment on her body was, for her, to free her soul for the more important work of a witness to God's goodness. In following this line of thought, we find that the most astounding act of submission and glorification of her calling is the amputation of her leg, which she endured without any analgesic to numb the pain. "After all things were made ready" for the procedure, she recollects, "[t]he physicians proposed to administer some opiate or stimulant that would enable me the better to endure the operation; but I refused to take even wine" (37). "It was but twelve minutes from the time the incision was made until the limb was dressed," Rankin acknowledges, "but to the one who is suffering the pain it seems far otherwise" (38). Although there is some physical respite from suffering following the amputation, Rankin reports that her "nerves still continued quite sensitive" and any relief she felt was short-lived. Through her many periods of affliction and recovery—preceding and succeeding the amputation—she continually supposed herself to be at death's door, a diagnosis usually confirmed by doctors, family, and friends, one of whom proposed that an autopsy be performed upon her death to determine the cause of her "disease," which Rankin immediately rejected, calling the "thought . . . unpleasant" and the "suggestion" itself "unkind" (78–79).

In her suffering, Mary Rankin became a symbol of Christ's love, a blessing to those in her local community who never doubted in her greater calling; they participated in her Passion and built a community around her sickbed. She offered spiritual guidance for those who sought it, and her fortitude gave meaning to the lives of those around her; she likewise was taken care of by those to whom she witnessed. Her neighbors provided housing, food, and clothing for her and her family, making sure that she had the finances, emotional support, doctors, and medicine she needed to maintain her invalid state. In

fact, the community found and paid for the best physicians and medical treatments available in mid-nineteenth-century west-central Pennsylvania. They ensured she had the best food to eat and, although bed-ridden, was always physically comfortable. They also supplied her with entertainment and encouraged her emotional well-being. For example, at one point in her confinement when she was recovering from one of her numerous maladies, a neighbor and landowner of some significance in the community offered to take her on a short ride around the neighborhood. The neighbor, Mr. Graham, "fearing that [she] could not bear to be drawn by a horse, concluded to take [her] . . . about a mile distant, by hand" (65). Rankin and a woman friend arranged themselves comfortably in "a buggy, while [Graham] and several other gentlemen pulled [them] along" (65). She spent several days at the Grahams and then was taken "home in the same manner" (65).

The outing facilitated by Graham is only one example of the support given to Rankin by her community. During another brief period of recovery (these seem to be sporadic and unpredictable), some of Rankin's lady "friends" persuaded her to teach a "small school, which met in [her] room" (62). Although these friends arranged for her comfort in the school, provided her with pupils and teaching materials, and generally anticipated any need she may have had in this endeavor, Rankin taught her young "scholars" for only three months, discontinuing the school when her health once again began to decline. In yet another effort to alleviate her suffering and provide her with some mobility, a neighbor bought her an artificial limb, the manufacture of which was problematic from the beginning (62). Nevertheless, in February 1850, the prosthesis arrived and was fitted onto the stump. In the most generous act of all, Ironmaster Henry S. Spang leased a plot of land to the Rankin family for twenty years on which they were permitted to build a home after the noise from the road running along the front of their house (at the time the main road in and out of the Mt. Aetna Furnace main works) became too unnerving and caused Rankin severe discomfort (41n56). Rankin, her mother, and two of Rankin's siblings lived in the house for the duration of the lease. Fortuitously, her father's long-lost brother, John,

"found" the family just as the lease was about to expire; he moved them all to New Wilmington, then Mercer County, where he helped Rankin's younger brother Archibald to find a job and establish a home for his two sisters and his mother (220–22).

Although there are numerous other incidences of generosity enacted by the community on behalf of Rankin's well-being and comfort, I will discuss only one more here—that which brought about the book's publication. After much prompting by her many friends and neighbors, Rankin agreed to record her testimony for those who might find inspiration in her life (29). However, because she could not hold a pen or sit upright in bed at the time she began her writing—even the scratching of the pen on the paper sent her into full-body spasms—she dictated her story to one of her doctors, who subsequently lost the manuscript (29). Exhausted and in pain, Rankin put aside the project until she was again called to "this long-neglected duty," at which time the manuscript is dictated to another "friend" (30). "The sum" for the publication of the book "was soon raised by the kindness of a few friends,"[20] and her "lady friends" of Blair County "made up the money to produce a steel engraving" of the author to be used as the frontispiece of the book (165, 165n319, 165n320). Between the first printing of the book in 1858, which sold out immediately,[21] and the second in 1871, the engraving was "destroyed by fire" (165n320). Rankin's "kind" women friends came to the rescue again, supplying the funds for a second engraving to be made; this plate was used for the 1871 revised edition and the 1887 reprint of that edition.

In an examination of the power of testimony in the twenty-first century, Lynn Stephen writes of a woman, Pilar, who through the telling of personal experiences "emphasizes a shared sense of suffering and community" (125). "I don't feel alone," she declares; "[w]e are all

[20]For more details on the book's publication, see pages 163–65; see also the Reed-Rankin letters in Appendix A of *Daughter of Affliction*.

[21]There is a discrepancy between Rankin's recollection of four thousand copies published of the first edition (164) and the publisher's charges for one thousand copies (Appendix A).

here together" (125). "Through the testimonial experience," Stephen concludes, Pilar "felt connected to a larger community" (125). Rankin often expressed that she had never felt alone, always referencing a spiritual presence and community backing that gave her strength to continue in her affliction. She described her own "shared sense of suffering and community" in *Daughter of Affliction*, where she memorialized the reciprocal nature of "redemptive suffering"[22] and validated her role as the "victim soul."[23] Guiding readers to see her text as more than another nineteenth-century spiritual autobiography, the subtitle of Rankin's narrative, *A Memoir of the Protracted Sufferings and Religious Experience*, extends her lived experience into the mystic and ascetic traditions. William Harmless notes that out of their struggle "mystics give us a language, a vocabulary, to begin to articulate what we all taste and feel. . . . [They] speak to [us] . . . despite the historical gulfs and cultural chasms that divide the mystics' worlds from our own" (x). Rankin's story takes us out of our own individual worlds and into those of the mystics and heroic ascetics. As readers across "historical gulfs and cultural chasms," we witness the religious conviction of a woman who embraced the role of the sufferer. In discovering her story, we are compelled to ask the

[22]The idea of "redemptive suffering" is that one can connect with God through the Passion of Christ by suffering for another. Understood this way, then, Rankin's suffering is not just for herself; she suffers for the spiritual needs of her community, and in her suffering others are able to experience their own spiritual awareness. See Lebacqz for more on this theological concept. I would like to thank my colleague John Woznak for bringing this term to my attention.

[23]According to Gerald Korson, "A victim soul is an individual who has been chosen by God to undergo physical, and sometimes spiritual, suffering beyond that of normal human experience. The victim soul willingly accepts this unique and difficult mission of offering up his or her pains for the salvation of others. . . . In the victim soul, such redemptive suffering takes on an intense, personal form, a gift of grace that is often accompanied by mystical phenomena." The victim soul not only accepts but embraces suffering as part of God's plan for him/her, a position that is clearly developed throughout Rankin's memoir. I am grateful to my colleague John Woznak for referring me to this source.

types of questions posed by Catherine L. Albanese and Stephen J. Stein,[24] to ask how a woman from a working-class background, living in a backwoods Pennsylvania county, was able to live the life of a lady of leisure and become a published author with three sold-out printings of her autobiography, even with the aid of an editor or editors, because, as readers discover, the attention Rankin receives in her life as an invalid far surpasses that which she experienced as a child or would have experienced had she not been afflicted or undergone an extreme religious conviction. When put in the context of mystical and ascetic traditions, Rankin's life and story turn her physical affliction into cultural capital, giving her not only narrative authority but also a position of power in her community. Providing not only for Rankin's physical welfare but also for her emotional and psychological well-being, her friends and neighbors make her the center of their community. Through their glorification of her asceticism, the people living around and working in the Mount Aetna Iron Works elevate themselves by becoming participants in this Passion Play. Hence, as the quotation in the title of this essay indicates, Mary Rankin praises God for her suffering and embraces the resulting power that comes to her through her dedication to His calling.

[24]Despite the popularity of spiritual narratives, Albanese and Stein point out, "[t]he texts of these narratives leave many questions still unanswered. How is it," they ask, "that women with such comparatively feeble formal education could write accounts cast in dramatic and sophisticated prose . . . ? Were these autobiographies ghost-written? Or dictated to an editor? Or heavily manicured in some other way?" (vii). Exhausting all other possibilities, they conclude, "charismatic religious authority transcended social station" (vi).

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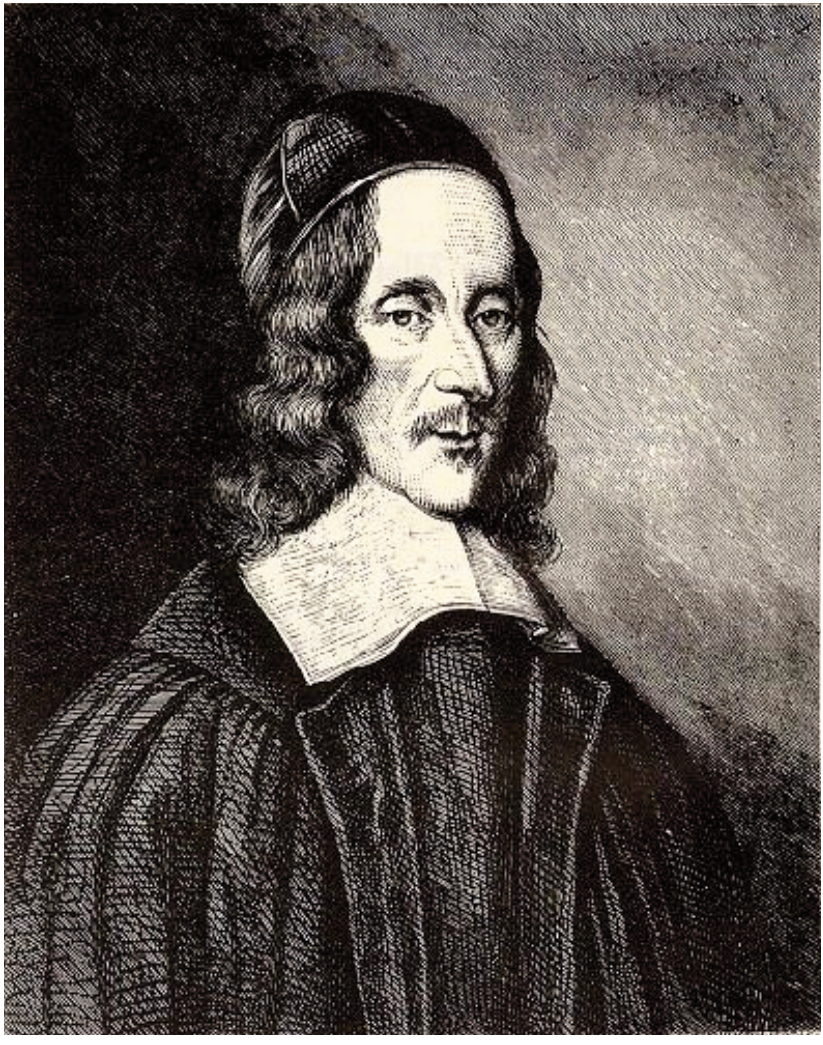

George Herbert

The Eucharistic Speech Act: Church Authority, Pastoral Power, and the Work of Salvific Eros in George Herbert's "Love III"

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George Herbert's 1633 collection of devotional poems, *The Temple*, is paradoxically private and public. The private voice of the poems often engages, as Barbara Harman has described it, "the conflict between self-will and the will of God" and "provides, in one form or another, a lesson in submission and conformity" (875–76). As the bearer of a "lesson in submission and conformity," Herbert's voice is simultaneously meditative and communal, solitary in its pious affirmation and directive in its exemplification of doctrine. These private-to-public lessons in submission and conformity play themselves out in *The Temple*, not only in individual poems, but also in the interplay between the poems and the architecture and furnishings of the church. They do so in an openly congregational way. This outward direction of the verse announces what Herbert refers to in his prose manual, *A Priest to the Temple, or the Country Parson His Character, and Rule of Holy Life* (1652), as the "form and character of a true pastor." Herbert's description of the activities of the "true pastor" as "feeding his flock" suggests the public performance of the twinned duties of instruction and exemplary piety, as well as an undisguised reference to the communion ritual (3). Indeed, Herbert's poems have a strong tone of exemplary personal piety

to them and are rightly still called "meditative"; Herbert calls them "private Ejaculations" on the title page of *The Temple*, suggesting both meditation and utterance "thrown out" into the world. In many of the poems in *The Temple*, Herbert's speaker stands as a solitary representative Christian. Yet in *The Temple*, as George Parfitt has observed, "the poem becomes both an act of worship and an object which can be used by others in contemplation of their deity" (53). In other words, Herbert's poems represent personalized, participatory examples of the kind of faith his "Flocke" might emulate. They locate their speaking action in the personal struggles of faith even as they represent, for a broader audience, faith's states of mind and feeling. In this way, the poems are both meditative and declamatory. The voice stands personalized in sufferance, but it also makes the imperatives of faith contingent, at least in part, on an engagement in a public context with "the traditional objects and ceremonies of worship" (Parfitt 53).

This emphasis on ceremony, taken with Herbert's characterization of the work of the country parson, remind us that Herbert's Eucharistic poems represent complex, participatory examples of the reformed communion. These poems enact the Eucharistic experience and gesture toward its interpretation. The tendency in reading Herbert has been to see him, as Parfitt observes, "at a distance from the controversies which characterize religious experience in the early seventeenth century" (53). Nonetheless, both the *Country Parson* and a poem like "Love III" present speakers who are both subjects and objects of pastoral ministrations. For Herbert, the Eucharist seems to be a self-constituting practice in which a dialectic between self-renunciation and self-assertion defines the mystifying rhetoric of religious assent. Michel Foucault's paradigmatic work in the late 1970s and 1980s on pastoral power and on the history of sexuality can help us isolate in Herbert's poems the conjunction of individuality and obedience worked through at the site of a disruptive eros. Such an analysis can place those texts and their tensions between sexuality and conscience as part of a history of emergent identities in the seventeenth-century religious lyric. These emergent lyric voices reveal the complex subjectivizations of both repressive and productive cultural power. Foucault's

concept of "pastoral power" points to the "individuation" of the Christian subject in relation to the "themes of salvation, law, and truth" and separate from "status, birth, or the splendor of . . . actions." This new subject, or new "form of power," is subjected in "continuous networks of obedience…through the compulsory extraction of truth" about its perturbations and motivations (*Foucault, Security, Territory, Population* 184–85). I will argue that Foucault's "pastoral power" shows how the erotic in "Love III," as well as in other of Herbert's poems, arises simultaneously as a strategy of private meditation and of a public expression of doctrine. For Foucault, pastoral power is the emergence of the crossing of desire and the internalized doctrinal demands of salvation. In "Love III," Herbert's Anglicanism performs itself as a moment of doctrinal affirmation. The poem's utterance aims at producing doctrinal assent, representing the subject of salvation in ways consonant with the discursive contours of Foucauldian pastoral power.

Herbert's *Country Parson* begins with a dedication to the reader that affirms this doubled position of pastor and supplicant:

> BEing desirous (thorow the Mercy of GOD) to please Him, for whom I am, and live, and who giveth mee my Desires and Performances; and considering with my self . . . The Lord prosper the intention to my selfe, and others, who may not despise my poor labours, but add to those points, which I have observed, untill the Book grow to a compleat Pastorall. ("The Author to the Reader" [1–2])

Notable here is the way that Herbert, from the start, elides the distinction between himself as the object of divine mercy and as the initiator of "desires and performances." For the country parson to represent a properly constituted subject of divine grace, he must "feed his flock," that is, he must administer to the needs of a parish. At the same time, however, these ministrations are part of a project, indeed a projection, of first-personal intention. Herbert asks that "the Lord prosper the intention to myselfe, and others," thus collapsing further the distinction between the pastor as an agent of divine will and the

pastor as a would-be submissive object of that will. Moreover, in Chapter One of *The Country Parson*, "Of a Pastor," Herbert calls the pastor "the Deputy of Christ for the reducing of Man to the Obedience of God," thus placing pastoral "Duty and Auctority" in the register of collective subordination (1–2).

Nonetheless, this placing of authority in the priest is not disembodied as prescription or principle. While Christ, "being not to continue on earth, but after hee had fulfilled the work of Reconciliation, to be received up into heaven, he constituted Deputies in his place, and these are Priests"; according to Paul, the priest "fils up that which is behinde of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, for his Bodie's sake, which is the Church" (2). The priest, for Herbert, in his duty thereof, "is to do that which Christ did, and after his manner, both for Doctrine and Life" (2–3). The phrase, "both for Doctrine and for Life," encompasses this duality of pastoral consciousness for Herbert: the pastor preaches doctrine, lives by doctrine, and, in living by doctrine, should strive to represent "what Christ did" (3). The emphasis here on doing, on performing an action, refers to ways of simulating the passion, of identifying with Christ and the trauma of the passion and the incarnation. The filling up of "that which is behinde of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, for his Bodie's sake" thus places Herbert's conception of the pastor's role as one of an embodied staging of the divine suffering. The pastor "looks" at his flock as a collective object of potential doctrinal education, and places himself in the position of the embodied simulacrum of the sufferings of Christ.

Locating the rhetorical action of Herbert's texts in "personalized sufferance" in this way suggests a convergence with Michel Foucault's idea of "pastoral power," a broadly historical concept outlined by Foucault in his 1977–78 lectures at the College de France, collected and translated in the volume *Security, Territory, Population*. By "pastoral power," Foucault refers to an emergent idea of governmentality in early Christianity that extends through the Reformation. In "pastoral power," the individual's relation to the social authority embedded in Greco-Roman notions of aristocratic self-care has been transposed into practices of individual self-examination, practices opened up in confession to the ministrations of the pastoral "good shepherd." The

practices of pastoral power thus cultivate interiority in acts of emergent self-identification for both the pastor and the flock. The pastor/shepherd presides over the lives of every individual in his "flocke," looking into every moral corner. Each act of confession offers gestures of self-disclosure that secure individualizing knowledge through voluntary submission through acts of conscience-driven self-examination.

Thus pastoral power attempts to define the conditions of the inward moral state of obedient subjects in a process beginning with obedience, progressing through putative self-knowledge, and leading to identity-defining acknowledgement and confession. Pastoral power, for Foucault, is thus both a totalizing and individualizing phenomenon. It is exercised primarily at the level of the subject. Emerging there, it stands as a universalizing call to obedience. Pastoral power, as a kind of bio-power, molds the subject to the collective. Foucault, in this way, extends the concept of productive power developed in his work *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1978). In that text, personal identity is tied, through early Christian confessional practices, to identity formation in the universalizing process of accession to diagnostic categories of desire. The production of the subject of sexuality becomes a matter of determining identity according to markers of desire that correspond to existential conditions of self-governability. As Ben Golder points out, with reference to the lectures in *Security, Territory, Population*: "[W]ith the introduction of the concept of 'governmentality,' we can definitely see lineaments of Foucault's future thematization of the government of oneself and of others, which comes to dominate his ethical writings in the early 1980s" (Golder 161). Foucault's work at this point thus becomes preoccupied with the over-lapping, interwoven registers of the domination of others and the governance of the self. Christian theology through the Reformation mobilizes believers *qua* individuals but does so by means of a universalized idea of the suffering self. So, as Golder says, "pastoral power" marks "the beginnings of an investigation of the Christian renunciatory hermeneutic of the self, which forms a parallel concern, and an exemplary counterpoint, to Foucault's late rehabilitation of pagan ethics and its contemporary redeployment as an aesthetics of existence" (161). That is, the exercise of pastoral power is not for Foucault

at this stage simply an outside / in, or top-down exercise. There is more here instead of Louis Althusser's "hailing" of the subject of ideology, the call to ideological incorporation and its attendant fantasy of autonomous self-constitution (Althusser 115–20).

Foucault's late 1970s and early 1980s analyses of pastoral power in earlier Christianity also raise issues of sight and visual perception, concerns of his earlier work on disciplinary power, in the twinned contexts of the will to know and the failure to see. These ocular concerns emerge in the implied relations of self-assertion and obedience in Herbert's texts, especially in those involving the Eucharist. "The natural body and blood of our savior" from the *Book of Common Prayer*, in both 1552 and 1662, is projected as a transcendental signifier for Herbert, an instance of Jacques Lacan's concept of the "Big Other," the site of approval and acceptance, comprising the deeply sought gaze of approval. At the same time, this Eucharistic "Other" represents the horror of the prospect of the body in pieces, the *objet petit a*, the "little other" that is the proximate cause of desire. In these terms, the very notion of the substance of the Eucharist is "mysterian," to use the term from the philosophy of mind, where it refers to "spirit" as an existing, epiphenomenal "thing," the definable properties of which we don't know. Thus, in these texts, fantasies of "perfect visibility, transparency, and illumination" conflict with potential acts of a willed, non-totalizing resistance that defines its own limits (Siisiainen 238).[1]

[1]As Lacan puts it in the seminar on anxiety, there is at work in anxiety, and in affect generally, "a notion of an outside that stands prior to a certain internalization, which is located, before the subject, in the locus of the Other" (102). Acknowledging the sheer number of glosses on the object a and its relation to the subject in the Lacanian oeuvre as well as the complexities of the concept's evolution over time, the Lacanian analyst and commentator Bruce Fink gives a clear analysis of the cluster of interlocking criteria of its compound agencies:

> Object *a* [functions] as the residue of symbolization—the real (R2) that remains, insists, and ex-sists after or despite symbolization—as the traumatic cause, and as that which interrupts the smooth function of the law and the automatic unfolding of the

This logic of lack and plenitude functions as an underlying premise in Anglican Eucharistic doctrine. The Anglican doctrine of the Eucharist is formed primarily in the years 1549–52. The issue in 1552 about the so-called "Black Rubric," that is, the *Declaration on kneeling*, provides a starting point for discussing the anxiety about

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> signifying chain[,] . . . [and] a last reminder or remainder of the hypothetical mother-child unity to which the subject's in fantasy to achieve a sense of wholeness, as the Other's desire, as the *jouissance* object, as that part of the mother the child takes with it in separation, and as the foreign, fateful cause of the subject's existence that he or she must become or subjectify in analysis. (83)

Recently, the Lacanian theologian Marcus Pound has developed these ideas specifically in relation to the Eucharist. For Pound, "the Eucharist is best understood as the traumatic intervention of Christ into time, an intervention that transforms our desires towards the absolute" ("The Assumption of Desire" 67). This transformation, he argues, "opens the door to a contemporary reinstatement of the doctrine of real presence" ("The Assumption of Desire" 67). As Pound puts it, "for Lacan the gaze is the very condition of consciousness. The gaze is the horizon within which the realm of the visible is established" ("Eucharist is Drive" 7). In other words, the gaze is that by which the subject would be seen, desires to be seen. It is neither simply who looks at the subject, nor what the subject looks at. Nor is it simply who or what looks back from within the experiential scene of the subject's visualizable field of desire. Rather, the Lacanian gaze is a placeholder of driven desire "outside" ready conscious access. It marks the subject's "lack." As such, it creates a baseline materiality against the obsessively symbolized but inaccessible drives of the psyche. In this way of thinking, the traumatic cause, the aura of the "real presence," interrupts the unfolding of the signifying chain. Thus, the Eucharistic scene occasions a material circuit of anxiety as this anxiety constitutes "voice" as the position of enunciation, transmitting itself through an intersubjective symbolic field. That is, the fall into physicality represented by the trauma of the Eucharist produces a traumatic and ultimately self-abnegating scene of failed self-presence. The body of Christ is dichotomously both there and not there, transcending the simple dichotomy of body and spirit by means of a projected fantasy of a transcendent plenitude. "Transcendence," in a Lacanian context, thus purports a kind of negative version of the idea of plenitude. The mystery may "arrive" from an origin of "transcendent plenitude," one that does not allow subtraction or negation, but it arrives by virtue of a symbolic system, and, as

the symbolic implications of the communion ritual among late sixteenth and early seventeenth Anglicans. As the story goes, John Knox, in an advisory capacity, asked for a declaration against kneeling when receiving communion to be added to the about-to-be-published 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*. The *Declaration*'s language reveals the usual mid-century concerns about idolatry. It addresses the worry that kneeling at communion represents the persistence of "misconstrued, depraved" Catholic doctrine, "misconstrued" to cause the communion service to be "interpreted in the wrong way, that is, as Catholic and thus idolatrous" (Cummings 667). Associating the words "misconstrued" and "depraved" unabashedly turns the issue into a scene of high Reformation rhetorical struggle. For certain, the language of *Declaration* initially turns up the amplitude on the issue of idolatry. It does so in a way not unexpected with a radical like Knox. Indeed, the language of the Declaration suggests that transubstantiation, not kneeling, is the primary issue. Transubstantiation gets its properly Protestant denunciation in the Declaration, and kneeling to receive the Eucharist, taken as a form of excessive adoration, becomes the subtle ground to adjudicate the tension between Reformation zeal and emergent Anglican decorum in working out the doctrine of the Eucharist. Cranmer's likely hand in the subsequent body of the *Declaration* turns the question toward the ritual memorializing of Christ's "presence," which, in the language of the Declaration, looms barely as a presence in anything like an existential sense in the communion service. Thus, as the *Declaration* proceeds, the issue of kneeling at communion becomes less a matter for a declaration and more a declination from a robust notion of the real presence and from any excessive adoration of it. That is, the *Declaration*, after its initial foray into radical polemics, becomes less a statement in response to contested theology and more a description of the proper posture and frame of mind for participating in the Eucharistic ritual:

> Whereas it is ordained in the book of common prayer, in the administration of the Lord's Supper, that the Communicants kneeling should receive the holy Communion, which thing being well meant, for a signification of the humble and grateful acknowledging

> of the benefits of Christ, given unto the worthy receiver, and to avoid the profanation and disorder, which about the holy Communion might else ensue: Lest yet the same kneeling might be thought or taken otherwise, we do declare that it is not meant thereby that any adoration is done, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental bread or wine there bodily received, or unto any real and essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood. (Cummings 667)

Hardly opposed to kneeling, this passage frames the act of kneeling as an acceptable ritualistic posture for affirming the "the humble and grateful acknowledging of the benefits of Christ" and for maintaining order in service. Kneeling, sitting, standing—the specific questions of mechanics are not the issue apart from their ritualistic function. That is, the passage, rather than continuing to excoriate the practice of kneeling as just so much more residual idolatry, moves into a justification of kneeling as an appropriate gesture of humility.

The criterion of acceptability for the ritual as described in this passage is restraint, not zeal or conviction, a kind of meditative self-removal constituting an acknowledgement of "God in the absolute mundane," in the "simple subsistence of life" (Cummings 667). There is, in this posture, a kind of indifference to the metaphysical questions of "substance" or "presence" as contexts for humbling oneself before Christ. Framing kneeling in the context of a symbolic gesture of restraint and focusing on the attitude of the communicant shifts the emphasis of the ritual away from the metaphysical complications of transubstantiation and the "true nature" of the real presence and toward the pragmatic activity of a symbolic ritual founded in an act of repetition. The substances of the bread and wine are not to be "adored" as substance nor questioned as to the true character of their presence; rather, kneeling simply *performs*, and thus signifies, "humble and grateful acknowledging." In this way, the behavioral phenomenology of the communicant is raised to the forefront, and the communion ritual becomes the context for the performance of humility and gratitude. Kneeling becomes one form of symbolic humility

and functions as a gesture, a performative emblem committing the communicant to the signification of the ritual.

Formalized kneeling thus signifies proper humility, but proper humility toward what? In the language of the Rubric, this humility is directed toward the "the natural body and blood of our savior Christ," which "are in heaven and not here." The passage, in other words, makes the case for kneeling as a performative act that affirms faith without idolizing the "substance" of the sacrifice:

> For as concerning the Sacramental bread and wine, they remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored, for that were Idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians. And as concerning the natural body and blood of our savior Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is against the truth of Christ's true natural body, to be in more places than in one, at one time. (Cummings 667)

This passage is an obvious dismissal of transubstantiation; it is so dismissive, in fact, that it reduces transubstantiation to literalist absurdity—"For it is against the truth of Christ's true natural body, to be in more places than in one, at one time." Thus, there is a double move at work here: idolatry is dismissed simultaneously as excessive zeal and as metaphysical obscurantism. In this way, the *Declaration*, or "Black Rubric," even if we understand it to be provoked by Knox, constitutes a strategic move toward a devotional posture based in a doctrinal ethos of performed restraint, an ethos substituting for a metaphysics of transubstantiation. Performed humility elides the issue of the real presence, and of any distinction between it and memorialist symbolic presence, in the form of a gestural, illocutionary act emphasizing restraint and entailing indifference to the "real presence" of Christ, indifference in the sense of a shift in the focus from metaphysics to the pragmatically gestural.

To put this elision another way, the production of pastoral power in the ritual of the Eucharist combines the imbricated registers of the domination of an objectified authority with an attention to the performance of the ritual gestures of the Eucharist as a form of care of the self. Pastoral power in these sixteenth-century Anglican discussions of

the Eucharist focuses on the hermeneutic autonomy of the self as an aesthetics of existence, one in which idolatry is cast off in the acknowledgement of the pragmatically repetitive nature of ritual. That is, the exercise of pastoral power in these Anglican policy statements on the Eucharist bases itself on the repetition of a ritual. The representation of Christ's passion through the breaking of the bread suggests both the lack in the divine Other, the host in pieces, and yet equally the promise of plenitude through the incarnation. Hence, the sublimation implied by the humble and repetitive posture of kneeling does not merely reroute the libidinal drive through an alternative object, but rather, by raising the Eucharistic object to the status of a thing through repetition, it turns restraint into a gesture of humility. Thus, the repetition that induces sublimation here does not produce subjective, narcissistic satisfaction. Rather, repetition is the means by which the celebrant/subject accesses the doctrinal relief resulting from a ritual engagement with the symbolic function of the partial object. The "real presence" is thus of a "God who redemptively traumatizes us as opposed to stabilizing our egos" (Keller and Pound, "Lacanian Psychoanalysis and the Traumatic Intervention of the Eucharist").

The events of the mid sixteenth century in England define Herbert's theological inheritance regarding the Eucharist, as they do for all Anglicans through the first half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, a poem like "Love III" is characterized by its illocutionary quality, its presentation of directive, expressive, and commissive speech acts that parallel the gestural act of kneeling in the *Declaration*. By producing this affective field, "Love III" stages a scene of the positioning of an objectified and personalized other in the lyric space of the poem. In this way, Herbert's "Love" is situated in the poem in context of lived experience and teems with the energy of an intimate encounter. The constitution of subjectivity in this poem is thus limned by the visual field, and issues of doctrine mobilize themselves as surveying gazes that universalize and particularize their objects. In both *The Country Parson* and in "Love III," fantasies of visibility, transparency, and the subject turned into an object conflict with acts of a willed, non-totalizing resistance defined by its own limits. In "Love III," the speech acts that constitute the poem all lead up to the moment of spoken acceptance:

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here":
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat. (Wilcox 658)

The poem dramatizes the lead up to the moment of the acceptance of communion, but it does so by dramatizing that moment as the lead up to an eroticized, homo-intimate encounter. In presenting this typically Herbertian enactment of humility along both ritualistic and eroticized lines, the poem represents the Eucharistic ritual in as a kind of courtship.[2] Of course, we expect such gestures of humility in Herbert's

[2]As Michael Schoenfeldt trenchantly puts it:

> [T]he extraordinary lyric that concludes The Temple—"Love III"—. . . [supplies] the most conspicuous example of the surprisingly carnal motives infusing Herbert's spiritual aspirations. Throughout The Temple, Herbert's courtship of God plays on a complex set of homologies between social and sexual courtship. Both an urge competitive with devotional desire and the highest expression of the devotional self, erotic longing affords Herbert a resonant vocabulary for expressing religious passion. (16)

poetry and in seventeenth-century English devotional poetry. The speaker denounces his own worthiness in a doctrinally conventional way—we hear in his self-disavowal the very stuff of the speaking action of the seventeenth-century devotional lyric. How-ever, the poem often arrests its first-time readers with "Love's" palpable participation in the poem's dialogic drama while remaining mysterious in its identity. "Love," though only vaguely present mimetically, emerges as obviously Christographic and obviously as an intimate encounter. The personification of "Love" in the poem suggests the personal relationship between the sinner as "guest" and Love as "host," with the obvious pun on communion. In this way, "Love" arises as an "other" that calls to be acknowledged and addressed; the dialogue figures the "host's" invitation to the "guest," and the figure of "Love" looms as a figure of desired approval, a figure one desires to be worthy to obey.

The poem's first stanza thus contextualizes a dual drama. The description of the speaker's soul "drawing back" is itself a performance of the soul drawing back from the posture of the humble petitioner. Yet the speaker is there to be "drawn," to be taken up submissively. The second stanza, with the self-referring line "I, the unkind, ungrateful," continues this performance of emboldened resistant humility driven by a sense of sin and a desire to be acknowledged. The poem incorporates "Love" into the drama of speech acts being enacted in stanza two, with the anointing "You shall be he." The singling out of the sinner/speaker/guest to be accorded grace is both an election and a seduction. The speaker's posture of humility suggests something of what Richard Rambuss has called, in his work on devotional eroticism in the Early Modern religious lyric, a "salvific transgressivity" in its mixing of the tones of humility and seduction (Rambuss 58). This dialogue leads up to the commissive speech act uttered by the speaker, "My dear, then I will serve," followed by Love's command—in the directive "You must sit down . . . and taste my meat"—to receive the Eucharist. The tone is private and homo-intimate; the poem a dramatic enactment of a movement from potential resistance to receptiveness. The poem conjures a private scene and promises privacy. At the same time, however, the dialogue between "Love" and the "I" of the poem makes the drama

"public," since it enacts a communal experience in the performance of faith and constructs typological relationships among courtship and communion. That is, the moment of intimacy is unveiled, almost parodically, as a version of the public ritual of the Eucharist. "Love III" in this way moves from privacy to publicity along a thematic track that goes also from the acknowledgement of lack to the expression of the wish for plenitude, that is, from the lack of spiritual understanding to the plenitude of Christ's intervention in the human world. The supplicant / speaker is opened to the superabundance of the life of the word, the reality outside of the neurotic containment of mere narcissistic satisfaction. "Love III" thus offers the possibility of an identification with the redemptive possibility of the trauma of God becoming flesh. The speaker is invited to consume an excess of life, to consume grace as material pleasure through the material presence of God made flesh.

But while this poem moves through a series of illocutionary acts that resist, anoint, command, and commit, thus offering an imitation of the process of submission that is its subject, the poem's effect doesn't end with the mimesis of its illocutionary speech acts within its dialogic structure. The poem's significance ultimately depends on making the acts it represents repeatable. It memorializes itself as a projectable scene of discarded resistance leading to the commission of an act of faith, an act of faith that is not just individual but exemplary and thus public. Calling the poem performative assumes a further perlocutionary dimension for it, a "functioning in the world," as Jonathan Culler has recently described lyric perlocution (131). Seen in this way, the poem becomes an exemplum within Herbert's self-defined role as "county parson." The poem, to follow Culler's ideas about lyric perlocution, is composed to "make itself memorable" and enters "the social imaginary" by offering its reader a "world to inhabit." It becomes, that is, as Culler puts it, an epideictic gesture in praise of its own role as "articulator" of a "memorable formulation" (131). "Love III" invites the reader to join in the Anglican Communion. It offers an example of doing so, one fraught, in an understated way, with shame, fear, and desire. But the poem is more than an invitation. It's also a directive, a command, and that command represents

the Eucharist as a scene driven by the recognition of the symbolically personalized materiality of the Eucharistic ritual.

Of course, seeing "Love III" as a "memorable formulation" is to view it as performing the work of doctrine. In this way, the poem works on the two levels that Herbert refers to in *The Country Parson* as constituting the problem of administering communion. Herbert remarks in Chapter XXII, "The Parson in Sacraments": "Especially at Communion times [the Parson] is in a great confusion, as being not only to receive God, but to break and administer him. Neither findes he any issue in this, but to throw himself down at the throne of grace" (88). The Parson's "confusion" comes, not only in preparing "to receive God," but also in being responsible for exemplifying "the way to it" for his congregation (89). The emphasis on "breaking" aligns discursively with "confusion," placing the poem's speaking action in the register of the reenactment of the trauma of the Eucharist. This tension between preparation to receive and preparation to administer communion characterizes the understatedly fraught speaking action of "Love III." The poem's illocutionary dimension enacts the preparation to receive the host, both passively in the closed confines of the scene of action and as a metaphor for receiving the host in church in the public Eucharistic ritual. However, in the poem's dialogue, the "host" also symbolically "receives" the speaker. This receiving takes place on the dual thematic track of the scene of invitation and the metaphor of the communion host as actively incorporating the subjectivized sinner. That is, both speaker and host are reduced to the material embodiment of the moment of eating even as their "communion" represents the full significance of the ritual. Communion is here reciprocal. And the Parson's role in the administration of communion corresponds to the poem's perlocutionary function, its potential as catechizing "by pithy and lively exhortations," because "in catechizing there is an humblenesse very suitable to Christian regeneration, which exceedingly delights him as by way of exercise upon himself, and by way of preaching to himself, for the advancing of his own mortification" (81–82). Our post-Hegelian notions about the self-enclosed dimension of the lyric in its making the ideal into the linguistically material real should not

blind us to what is, in "Love III," such a doctrinally directed preparation for the reception of the Eucharist. The self-humiliating gesture of acceptance and the necessary subjection required of the communion ritual defines the experience of both Herbert's poetic speaker and the Parson who must both receive and administer. Both are subjects of pastoral power, and pastoral power determines the relation of each to the ritual of the Eucharist.

But in both cases, the focus is equally on the acceptance of the "real presence" as it is on the process of subjectification, the construction of a subject properly humble and properly open to the acceptance of Thomas Cranmer's notion of the "presence of Christ" as explained in the *Defense of the True and Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ* (1550):

> Although Christ in his human nature substantially, really, corporally, naturally and sensibly, be present with his Father in heaven yet sacramentally and spiritually he is here present. For in water, bread, and wine, he is present as in signs and sacraments, but he is indeed spiritually in the faithful Christian people, which according to Christ's ordinance be baptized, or receive the holy communion, or unfeignedly believe in him. (40)

The emphasis here sits squarely, less with the idea that Christ's presence is "here" only "sacramentally and spiritually . . . present as in signs and sacraments," and more so with the effect of the disciplinary performance of the communion ritual. Ritual serves doctrine to insure that, by being "spiritually in the faithful Christian people," they "unfeignedly believe." There is here, in other words, something of the reverse logic of rituals of believing. The believer believes because he kneels and prays, not the other way around. One doesn't believe and then act out the ritual to express that belief; one acts out the ritual and thus comes to something like "belief," or "faith." Foucauldian pastoral power animates this reverse logic. Indeed, Foucauldian subjectivizations to any form of bio-power base themselves in this kind of socially determining logic. Herbert's poem "The H. Communion" similarly implies in its fourth stanza the priority of the acceptance of the call to

doctrine as defining the subject's acceptance of any Christological presence in the communion ritual and its implications for faith:

> Onley thy grace, which with these elements comes,
> Knoweth the ready way,
> And hath the privie key,
> Op'ning the souls most subtile rooms. (Wilcox 188)

Eucharistic "grace" here stands as a condition of doctrinal persuasion, the "privie key" to opening the soul to proper belief and to the proper exercise, indeed performance, of faith. But at the same time, that performance drives the subject to the desire for salvation, as the will to know theological truth is enacted as an opening up, a submission, to the power of that pastoral knowledge.

Stanley Fish has argued that Herbert's *Country Parson*, far from revealing the kind of humility, directness, and sense of resolvable spiritual crisis of some of Herbert's lyrics, is in fact a vision of the ultimate surveillance of the "Flocke" by its shepherd-parson. Flocks are indeed herded metaphorically, but "herding" is not necessarily an exercise of simply repressive power. For Fish, "the paranoid fantasy of perpetual surveillance is the inevitable consequence of Herbert's monotheism," and if the speakers of many of Herbert's poems imagine themselves in a position of radical subjection, *The Country Parson* turns such personae into actors in a drama of absolute, collective doctrinal confirmation. As Fish puts it, rightly enough, "in Herbert's theology, it is the 'outward gesture' that makes good what a heart, naturally and totally foul, cannot, by itself, perform." But Fish calls *The Country Parson* a vision of the "darkness and terror" of Herbert's theological version of absolute monarchy. For Fish, "the most remarkable thing about The Country Parson is its total lack of interest in the interiors of either its title figure or his parishioners" (165–66).

I think, however, the passage about the Parson's preparation for both administering and receiving communion invites a different characterization of the relation between interiority and ideological persuasion in Herbert's thought, as does "Love III." Rather than framing the position of the parson as one of aggressive mobilization

and surveillance, as Fish does, Herbert's self-directed ritual advice in both *The Country Parson* and in "Love III" suggest, not techniques of domination, but rather techniques of the self, practices for opening "the souls most subtile rooms." Foucault argues that the Christian pastorate constitutes

> a form of individualization that will not be acquired through the relationship to a recognized truth, [but] will be acquired instead through the production of an internal, secret, and hidden truth. Analytical identification, subjection, and subjectivation (*subjectivation*) are the characteristic procedures of individualization that will in fact be implemented by the Christian pastorate and its institutions. What the history of the pastorate involves, therefore, is the entire history of procedures of human individualization in the West. Let's say also that it involves the history of the subject. (*Security, Territory, Population* 184)

Belief in the "truth" of Christianity is, in this account, a determined subject-position, but it is a coerced one only insofar as the coercion comes through the ideological persuasions within the discursive practices of the institutional framework of the church. Subjectivity in this account is not coerced in the sense of discipline and punishment but as an accession to an available mode of conscious being. According to Foucault, pastoral power "lays claim to the daily government of men in their real life on the grounds of their salvation and on the scale of humanity" (*Security, Territory, Population* 148). There is at work here, in other words, neither the individually willed "assertion of the self's mastery of self," nor "a whole network of servitude" unless, and only unless, that network "involves the general servitude of everyone with regard to everyone and, at the same time, the exclusion of the self, of the ego, and of egoism as the central, nuclear form of the individual" (*Security, Territory, Population* 183). Moreover, this conventional, late-Foucauldian distinction between two kinds of power correspond to what Foucault calls the two linked "ensembles of obligation": the obligation to "dogma" and the obligation to a self-constituting practice that "cannot be anything else but undefined," a

practice applied here in which a dialectic between self-renunciation and self-assertion defines the mystifying rhetoric of religious assent (*Security, Territory, Population* 178).

This dialectic constitutes a preparation for the reception of grace. It is both fundamentally doctrinal, that is, "state-centered," but also subjectively acceded to. The dialectic between self-renunciation and self-assertion works itself out in "Love III" in the affective drama of shame and acceptance. The performative "let my shame / Go where it doth deserve" works to confirm its opposite; shame confirms the pious subject's fitness for grace, not the opposite; shame is the subjective condition of belief. Further, the avowal of shame marks the discursive performance of the acceptance of the signification of the Eucharist and of the appropriate decorum of the Eucharistic ritual. "Love," the shadowy allegorical figure of the real presence, also performs acts of speech in the poem's dialogue and would secure humble conviction to the doctrine of the exigency of the Anglican Communion. "Love's" invitation to the speaker simultaneously offers communion as a practice of transcendence and opens a void from within the fullness of the real presence, demystifies it by making it "real." In a sense, all "bodies" are "in pieces" here, the point of the communion ritual being to consume, as Herbert says in *The Country Parson*, "the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, for his Bodie's sake." For Herbert in "Love III," both priest and penitent "do that which Christ did"; they experience the trauma of brute materiality at the core of the Eucharist ritual.

In this way, "Love III" is a condensed version of the preparation referred to in *The Country Parson*, but, crucially, it is a *discursive* preparation to accede to doctrine. The poetics of the poem present a scene of obedient, dialogic instruction, and the poem's attitude toward the question of the real presence in the poem, even as "Love" speaks, seems one almost of indifference in the sense of a turning aside. The poem emphasizes the accession to a doctrinal moment through acts of speech, speech becoming "the privie key / Op'ning the souls most subtile rooms." "Indifference" thus acknowledges the indistinctness of Herbert's Anglican position regarding the real presence. By focusing on ritualized, performative speech as a form of assent, rather than on

the symbolics of the real presence (as John Donne sometimes does and as Richard Crashaw does extravagantly), Herbert's Anglican attitude emphasizes the rhetoric of ritualized assent in a process of subjectification, and the physical or metaphysical presence, real or symbolic, is, pragmatically, among the lesser of his concerns.

Herbert's Eucharistic poems are thought to say little about doctrine. However, as I suggest here, while Herbert's Eucharistic poems indeed do not have much direct to say about doctrine, they are in their way complexly doctrinal. Since the 1559 Act of Uniformity, the third such in a decade of contested revision since 1549, the phrasing of the Anglican Communion service balances a memorialist view of signification with an implied, secondary affirmation of the real presence in consecration. Herbert's most accomplished modern editor deemed him the poet for whom "indifference to the manner of Christ's Presence in the sacrament was a typically Anglican position" (Hutchinson 548). Herbert's relative indifference to the metaphysics of divine presence in the human world should suggest to us another way of seeing these poems: as speech acts aimed, not at asserting, in compact lyric form, a truth about either the real presence or its signification, but rather as speech acts aimed at producing and maintaining properly constituted subjects of assent through a mixing of directive, expressive, and commissive modes of speech. In doing so, Herbert's Eucharistic poems impute doctrinal illocutionary work, in ways that are both submissive and assertive, to the Eucharistic ritual. But they do so by representing the subject of salvation as both a subject and an object of the discursive ministrations of Foucauldian pastoral power, standing as an example of the theological grounds of early modern practices of power and political subjectivity.

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Obligations

How awful they can sound, like weekend chores,
So primly Latinate
And obstinate the obligations
One naturally abhors
And more or less can't wait
To pass down to the upstart generations

Like heirloom silverware
Or global warming, debt or doing dishes;
And yet—at root, seen through—they're ties,
Kin to the latticework that backs a chair
Or stitcheries that bind our wiles and wishes
In books we canonize,

And there'd be no immortal tapestries
To sanctify a space
Without the back and forth of looms—
No complex harmonies,
No lovers who enlace
Their fingers down the aisle as brides and grooms,

No healing ligatures,
Not one religion to redeem the times . . .
Indeed, our very DNA,
Composed of double helices, ensures
Our subtlest chemistries must find their rhymes.
What more is there to say?

Behold the weeping woman who would bring
The costliest libation
Or weave long promises of prayer—
Who'd give most anything—
For one more obligation:
The nightly braiding of a young girl's hair.

–Stephen Kampa

Tennessee Williams

The Unforgivable Sin in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*

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Critical Background

An exploration of the biblical basis underlying the fable of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) will reveal three key Christian concepts in the play: the *imago Dei*; a *katabasis* into "desire" leading to a spiritual death; and the unforgivable sin which results in punishment.[1] A select review of the critical literature will preface the discussion of Williams's faith and the evidence for a hermeneutical approach from a Christian perspective.

Before I make the case that given Williams's many attestations of faith a Christian approach to *Streetcar* has been neglected, I briefly review how critics have interpreted *Streetcar* over the years from Freudian, Queer, and African-American perspectives.

It bears emphasizing that my inclusion and framing of these arguments is not to analyze or criticize them but to illustrate the distinction between theoretical and cultural approaches and that taken

[1]The *imago Dei*: (Genesis 1:26:27; James 3:9; Colossians 1:15); *katabasis* (1 Peter 4:6 and Ephesians 4:9) of depraved desire leading to spiritual death (James 1:13–15; 3); the unforgivable sin (Matthew 12:31).

here. I am not suggesting that these are not valid approaches but rather arguing *for* the value of including in the discussion a Christian reading that deciphers the hard-coding of Williams's symbolism rooted in his well-known use of Christian tropes.

Williams wrote most of his work during the peak Freudian-craze of mid-century so it is not surprising that the most representative line of criticism in Williams in the 20th century is probably Freudian. Gilbert Debusscher claims that Williams's emphasis on "the importance of sex" was characteristic of "the emerging Freudian revolution of which the playwright was to become a leading proponent on Broadway" (168). Nancy Tischler notes that Williams lived "in an era bombarded with the ideas of Freud" ("Romantic Textures," 160), and she limns the Freudian Eros/Thanatos theme in his plays, observing: "Even the nymphomaniacs (Cassandra in *Battle of Angels* and Blanche of *A Streetcar Named Desire*) realize that sex is little more than a way of forgetting about death" ("Distorted Mirror," 395). Anne Fleche claims that the "Freudian logic of lost beginnings" "objectifies Blanche and enables her to be analyzed and confined as the embodiment of non-being." Writing from a perspective of the film version, Nina Liebman likewise describes Blanche's sexuality from a Freudian perspective, seeing her portrayals in film as a misogynistic application of *Freud's Studies in Hysteria*: "In these madness films, women are punished with insanity for expressing their desire. . . . Thus Blanche is revealed as a woman of unnatural sexual drives—an exhibitionist, a seducer of young boys, a bride of a sexual deviant. . . . Blanche's sexuality is evil. . . ." (27, 30). The interpretation of the film Blanche is in fact identical to the critique of the stage Blanche whose character critics panned for those very reasons.

Drawing on Anna Freud's theory of traumatology and Sigmund Freud's *The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense*, Joseph Silvio does a deep dig into the play from an interdisciplinary perspective. He reflects on Blanche's disorders by way of psychoanalyzing Williams, soberly observing: "He became an abusive alcoholic, a promiscuous unfaithful partner, a terrified hypochondriac, a compulsive wanderer. He became Stanley, and he became Blanche, but he

was always trying to become Mitch and to find his own Stella" (143). While Silvio's conclusion may be overreaching, his claim about the characters as archetypal representations of themes originating in Williams's life has much biographical support.

Changing our focus to a queer perspective, Francisco Costa's analysis bears quoting at length:

> This gay male gaze redirects the heterosexual male/female dichotomy to the male body, distorting the distinction heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman and active/passive. . . . Williams places Stanley as object of gaze and desire, both straight and gay. This erotization of Stanley's male body, if only paratextually, has a subversively queer force that undermines the play's heteronormative model. (181)

Costa's observation is supported by Williams himself who Gore Vidal quotes as saying, "I cannot write any sort of story unless there is at least one character in it for whom I have physical desire" (*Stories* xxiii). That fact alone compels readers to look for the paratextual clues that Williams employs, as in the "something" of the story "Something About Him" (1946); or by naming the female character "Willie" in *This Property Is Condemned* (1946); or the dichotomous description of Heavenly in the stage notes to *Spring Storm* (1937): "Her nature is confusing to herself and to all who know her" (*Spring Storm* 3). In Williams, attractive young characters denominated "her" usually means "him."

Along a similar vein, John Clum has written extensively on gay subjects in theater and literature and notes that "beautiful men, straight or gay, are erotic fantasies for Williams." Clum further notes, "In fifties dramas, very good looks are often a sign of homosexuality. . . . Being too good looking, thus being looked at, was a sign of being not totally masculine, thus homosexual" (139, 135–136). In my own reading, I have found these characters to be coded with signifiers as when Myra says of Val in *Battle of Angels*, "you're too good looking," or Dick in *Spring Storm* who is described as being a "good-looking boy," or Chance in *Sweet Bird of Youth* who

says, "I used to be the best-looking boy in this town."[2] Such "boys" are often paired with an older "woman" (Blanche), thus reconfiguring the heteronormative type of the opposite sex in any given situation.

John Bak looks at gender as performance, stating:

> [A] woman's heterofeminist exterior (such as Blanche DuBois's in *Streetcar* or Liling Song's in *M. Butterfly*) is in no way proof of her resultant heterosexual identity since it is all just an act anyway; rather, her heterosexuality is a social assumption resulting from her performing the necessary gender signs to assure such a reading, to which her clothing greatly contributes. (96)

In a different manner than Bak suggests, an image of non-gendered figures in the Williams *oeuvre* that defies "social assumption" occurs in the story "The Yellow Bird" (1947) where "three figures of indeterminate sex" all ride astride a dolphin (*Stories* 228). Gender—whether it is identified or "indeterminate"—is frequently multi-valanced in Williams and can often be read metaphorically.

George Crandell makes the case that Stanley in *Streetcar* is a coded African-American figure, writing "by means of a racialized discourse, linking a descendant of Polish immigrants with imagery traditionally associated with black characters, Williams nevertheless covertly broaches the topic of miscegenation in a play ostensibly without an Africanist presence" (345). Rachel Van Duyvenbode likewise sees Stanley as an encoded representative of African-Americans, extending the argument into non-human metaphors of racialization:

> The deployment of colour coding and the collapsing of human behaviour into animal imagery can be found vividly in the depiction of Stanley in Streetcar. In Streetcar, features of the racial other displace Stanley's whiteness, thereby confusing the boundaries between racial and ethnic groups. (211)

[2] *Battle of Angels*, 211; *Spring Storm*, 3; *Sweet Bird of Youth*, 166.

In these essays, Williams is sometimes faulted for the lack of black characters in his works, or for the diminished role that they play, or for an almost sub-human portrayal of them. However, as is evident in stories like "Big, Black Idyll" (1931), written when he was only 20, and "Desire and the Black Masseur" (1946), Williams was acutely sensitive to, and critical of, racism in the South, purposely choosing the very stereotypes that Crandell and Duyvenbode find problematic—big, menacing, sexual, violent, etc.—to portray racism in his own culture. Richard Wright does the same thing in the powerful story "Big, Black, Good Man" (1957) whose protagonist Wright variously describes as a "huge black thing," a "black mass of power," a "devil of blackness," and as having "the black paw of the beast" (87, 95, 95, 95). Such counter-indicative descriptions are the paratextual evidence of racism in the *culture*, not in the author.

I. The Image of God in the Three-Storied Universe

> *Blanche*: "Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella—my sister—there has been some progress since then!
> Such things as art—as poetry and music—"
>
> "Maybe if I look hard enough into this fog I'll begin to see God's face. . . ."
> (Tennessee Williams in *Tom* 174)

When Blanche states, "Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image . . ." she is referencing the 3,500 year old Judeo-Christian doctrine of Genesis.[3] As Professor of New Testament Studies David L. Turner emphasizes: "It would be difficult to overstate the centrality of the image of God as a crucial theme in biblical theology" (Turner). The importance of the theme would naturally be the sub-

[3]"Let Us make man in Our image, after our likeness." Genesis 1:26, *English Revised Version*.

ject of sermons that Williams heard as a child in his grandfather's church. Similarly, when Williams himself writes "Maybe if I look hard enough into this fog I'll begin to see God's face," he alludes to the famous Pauline image: "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face" (1 CO 13:12 ERV). Williams substitutes "fog" for "mirror," but the identical import of both statements communicates that the teleology of our lives is hidden from us and that its revelation lies in seeing God's face. That he expressed himself as he did reflects a biblical phrasing that only a Christian would use in conversation or even know to use.

Thematically, the evidence for the Christian framing of *Streetcar* falls within Williams's broad artistic use of Christian motifs. Nancy Tischler observes of *Summer and Smoke* (1948), "Although both heaven and hell were part of his three-storied universe, they were romantic interpretations of the medieval cosmology" (160). Similarly, writing of *Camino Real* (1953), Jan Balakian claims: "But even Elia Kazan, the director, and Williams himself were confused about the play; neither realized that *Camino* was really a romantic pageant, with roots in a medieval tradition" (80). Thomas Adler's reading agrees with these general observations of the Christian themes in Williams: "Although the categorization 'morality play' has frequently implied a derogatory judgment . . . it can still be applied revealingly" to *Summer and Smoke* (115).

These are astute observations, but puzzlingly general and not founded in a specifically Christian analysis. The characterizations of Williams's dramaturgical architecture is technically correct as regards the form—the "body" of the work, but as Jan Balakian's comment confirms, they attribute to Williams a motive that he did not have. Williams wasn't "confused." Portraying medieval cosmology was not his purpose, however analogous his drama might seem. The argument here differentiates the textual "body" from the textual "spirit" of the work in a manner similar to Philip Kolin's application of the erotic body in Williams: "Central to Barthes's epistemology of erotic aesthetics is analogizing the text to the human body. 'Does the text have a human form, is it figure, an anagram of the body? Yes, but of our body? Yes, but of our erotic body'" (290).

Consequently, my argument differentiates between Christian approaches by asserting that while *Streetcar* is unavoidably like a morality play in that it portrays the soul's struggle for salvation from a metaphorical hell, the textual, "spiritual" body of Williams's Christian motifs exist independently of any literary genre and derive from his knowledge of the Bible. The motifs do not *self-consciously* originate in a medieval model, as we find in Dante or in C.S. Lewis, but from his earliest and life-long experiences as a Christian. The genre claims of a heaven/hell theme moored to a morality play function separately from specifically biblical constructions such as those I am emphasizing. The elements of descent, savior, and martyrdom are not uniquely Christian and can be found in the pagan myth of Orpheus as sacrificial savior descending into Hades, Christ-like, to recover Eurydice and being martyred. The interweaving of Christ and Orphic archetypes is central to *Orpheus Descending* whose heavy-handed distortions of Christan symbols caused the play to be closed in Boston. As Rory Egan explains about the title change from *Battle of Angels* (1940) to *Orpheus Descending* (1957):

> This, however, does not mean that the Christian element in the first play has been replaced in the second by pagan tradition which was absent in the first. On the contrary, once the second play has brought the Orphic content into the foreground, that element becomes more readily discernible, even obvious, in the first play as well, while the Christian strain remains as strong, perhaps becomes even stronger. . . . In both plays, in fact, the Orphic and the Christian ingredients are inextricably interlaced. (63–64)

To a lesser extent, it is pagan and Christian elements that are "inextricably interlaced" in *Streetcar*. Nonetheless, the general motifs of the Christian material in *Streetcar* overlaps two separate Christian arguments of causality—those claiming the morality play model asserted by Tischler, Balakian, and Egan, and the argument presented in this essay. The movement from Belle Reve to Elysian Fields constitutes a Christian fall from grace to a purgatorial third "story"

based on the internal evidence of the play and stands independently of an argument based on an extra-textual hypothesis of medieval cosmological models. Having said that, any conversation that includes heaven, hell, purgatory, a journey down or up, necessarily can be compared to an *anagoge* of the soul. The distinction I am making is that the likeness is incidental and hard-wired into the Christian myth and that Williams did not write prescriptively according to Dante's classic "four senses": literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical (Dante).

What is without dispute in making these fine distinctions is that the Christian element is undeniable. The presence of dozens (if not scores) of examples in the interviews, letters, and memoirs makes the absence of discussion of Williams's faith puzzling considering how often he professed belief in God and prayer. Even as he was being publicly excoriated for the gay content that was becoming manifest in his work, his theological constructions present a coherent, consistent, and compelling record of his faith.[4] Drawing from the letters, he references God in a reverent manner in at least eight letters on a wide variety of topics and refers to God more than fifty times in others. In point of fact, the importance of the Christ-motif to Williams is evident in his *overuse* of it, writing to his editor that he had "[t]oo many Christ figures in my work, too cornily presented" (156). Like Francisco Costa's emphasis on paratextuality concerning representations of the physical body, and Barthes's analogue of the textual erotic body, the careful reader must employ a similarly close reading of representations of the "spiritual" body in Williams.

In addition to the textual evidence in Williams's letters, interviews, and memoirs, the evidence for a strong Christian reading of the play rests on an amplitude of anecdotes. In his biography, Lyle Leverich notes his grandparents effectively raised him and Rose for a few years and the children became steeped in church culture and doctrine:

[4]With the exception of the letter to Jay Laughlin, I only have the first two volumes of Williams letters which extend to 1957, so there are likely many more such instances in the ensuing twenty-five years.

> Growing up in a rectory during his formative years and regularly attending church and Sunday school, Tom had instilled in him a love of God in heaven and a dread of Judgment. . . . He witnessed the examples of Christian tolerance, compassion, and duty in his grandmother's actions and heard them exalted in Grandfather's sermons. (*Tom* 137)

Nancy Tischler adds some detail, observing that "The youthful hours Tom Williams spent . . . reading the scripture passages, repeating the words of the services were not wasted" (159). Williams's Christian belief, however nominal in form, persisted throughout his life as when he revealed in a 1958 interview that, "[e]very time I have a play opening, I close a door on a certain room and kneel down and pray to God. And I very often receive an answer—in fact, I've always received an answer" (*Conversations* 57). This testament of enduring faith is a remarkable and not much publicized aspect of Williams that merits a closer reading of the play as being *scripturally* and not just thematically Christian. This may seem like a difference without distinction to non-Christians, but to Christians of either stripe, citing the Bible, even indirectly, is a marker of theological orientation that establishes scripture as having metaphysical authority.

Knowing the full range and depth of Williams's Christian affiliation from his earliest years until his death explains how integral it was to his craft. Tischler notes that as "a child of the Church," he "readily commingled aesthetic and religious mysticism, eroding barriers between art and faith. His imagery of the Poet is frequently laced with references to Christ" (155).

The mythos of the play is decidedly "commingled," as are the characters. From a Christian perspective, the other sense in which Blanche and Stella are "a long way from being made in God's image" is in position. Before Blanche and Stella's arrival at the two-flat in New Orleans, they lived in a place that in the play assumes mythic proportion: Belle Reve, meaning "beautiful dream" in French. In Nancy Tischler's schematic metaphor, Belle Reve is the top "story" of heaven. The white house with white columns functions as an archetypal temple and it has a biblical history memorialized by a testament

of "thousands of papers, stretching over hundreds of years" (490). Those papers are a scriptural record, a contractual witness of broken trust by succeeding generations of the DuBois family.

Belle Reve's history constructs an antebellum timeline with unmistakable covenantal and transgressional associations. In an allusion to the biblical theme of Israel's unfaithfulness, Blanche says it was lost because the "father and uncles and brothers exchanged the land for their epic fornications," (490). However, that is not quite true. It is *Blanche* who loses the mansion and her position in "heaven" because of her own "epic fornications," which are, indeed, noteworthy. Consequently, her loss of Belle Reve constitutes a "fall" from a mythic Christian past, where she had once existed as an image of God, to an equally mythic Dionysian present of drinking, dancing, and sexuality in Elysian Fields, the bottom story of the schematic that represents a purgatorial locus of purification through suffering.

In Greek mythology, Elysian Fields is found in Hades. Allean Hale has compiled the most complete record of Williams's early reading and she notes that "[h]is early reading was wide and deep," "he knew the classics," and "he often structured his plays with classical mythology in mind." Edith Hamilton, in *Mythology* (1942), characterized Elysian Fields as "a miserable dream" (43). Williams could certainly have read Hamilton's book and it would explain the precise dualism of the two "dreams": one beautiful, one miserable; one Christian, one pagan; one moral, one Dionysiac. This intermingling of psychological, classical, and Christian elements has been noted in other works as well. Donald Spoto writes of *Battle of Angels* that it is "intrigued with Christian symbolism, Dionysian myth, Freudian motifs and D. H. Lawrence" (109).

Blanche's *katabasis*—her descent—in *Streetcar* as a Christian parable of the Fall constructs semantic tiers of heaven, purgatory, and a middle world. "God's image" may *seem* a "long way" behind Blanche, but it is a time of recent memory, of a civilized, hierarchical gentility. What Blanche finds when she arrives in Elysian Fields is that the *imago Dei* is disfigured into what she calls "sub-human" in a memorable monologue discussing Stanley:

> He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something—subhuman—something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something—ape-like about him. . . . Night falls and the other apes gather! There in the front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling and gnawing and hulking! His poker night!—you call it—this party of apes! (510)

The cave reference elicits the idea of the subterranean domain of Elysian Fields, one of whose chthonic gods is Dionysos. Stanley's dual role as Hades (abductor and "king" of Hades) and Dionysos (drinker, sexual predator) adds mythic shade to the narrative. Keeping those details in mind, the conflict between the Christian and pagan value systems is marked by the difference in nature, conduct, and position between one made in "God's image" in Belle Reve and the "subhuman" of Elysian Fields.

Blanche, in her post-Christian existence inhabits what Philip Kolin describes as a "paper ontology" (*Modern Drama* 454). She has come to live a tenuous, symbolic existence full of artificial signifiers—fake furs, fake jewelry, fake lovers. Like her paper lantern, her narrative is a brightly-colored tissue concealing the truth. She possesses a fragile, trinitarian humanism of art (paper lantern), poetry (Whitman), and music (the Varsouviana) that are the proxies for the religious symbols, scriptures, and hymns of the old faith of the upper world. However, they cannot survive in the distorted geometry of the lower world of Elysian Fields as exemplified by the sloping planes of Van Gogh's "The Night Café" (1888), by Stanley's invocation of sharply pointed "re-bop" speech, and by the discordant "blue piano" that constitutes the debased lower world's trinitarian culture (492, 488, 492). Her hopeful reliance on "art, poetry, and music" is subverted because the art, poetry, and music of the underworld must necessarily reflect the values of that world, values whose associations of death, guilt, and loneliness Blanche brought with her on her journey down. Like the paper lantern, she is torn apart and is forced to reveal to herself and to others that she is not what she claims to be.

II. The Demon of Desire

> *Blanche*: [with faintly hysterical humor] "They told me to take a streetcar named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at—Elysian Fields!"

> But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death.
> James 1:15 (ASV)

Blanche's hysteria at having transited from the white columns of Belle Reve to the sordid surroundings of Elysian fields via conveyances named "Desire" and "Cemeteries" is understandable. The word "desire" is fraught with meaning in the context of my claim that its source derives from the passage in James. The Greek word *epithumia* occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament and is translated variously as "lust," "desire," and even "concupiscence" ("Epithumia"). The innocuous word "desire"—like the paper lantern—masks the etymological reality of both the biblical and classical meanings of the term. In fact, it is not the exigencies of the situation or some kind of bad luck that drags Blanche down to Elysian Fields but *lust*. Blanche, not to put too fine a spin on her avocation, had become a whore. The biblical formula is temptation leads to desire, desire leads to sin, and sin leads to death. Blanche's dialogue similarly has desire leading to death. The logic, pattern, and diction link Blanche's speech to a singular construction that is famously biblical. As with the reference to "God's image" and "God's face," such phrasing is uniquely scriptural.

However, as we have seen elsewhere in Williams, he also incorporates classical themes. *Epithumia* constitutes half of the dialectical struggle in Plato's "Allegory of the Charioteer" in which the soul drives a chariot pulled by two horses, *epithumia* (desire) and *thumia* (will). The moral of the allegory is that if the soul is ruled by the horse of "desire," it is pulled down to earth. Strikingly, this is the same pattern we see with "desire" in the Epistle of James. Once fallen, the Platonic soul incarnates into one of nine kinds of people,

in accordance with how much truth the soul has "discerned": "In her first birth . . . the soul that hath seen the most of being shall enter into the human babe that shall grow into a seeker after wisdom or beauty, a follower of the Muses and a lover . . ." (495). Notably, all three objectives describe Blanche who loves beauty, the arts, and the finer aspects of romance; she refers to Mitch's "gallantry" and calls him, preposterously, "Rosenkavalier" (499, 520). Descending to the ninth and lowest level of human incarnation is that of the "tyrant": Stanley.

Intersecting Christian and Platonic patterns of descent marks the third variation on the theme of the katabasis of desire. Although Blanche refers jokingly to the nearby L&N tracks as the "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir," it provides Williams the opportunity to reference Poe's "Ulalume" (1847). In the poem, a "demon" of irrational desire leads the narrator in a journey of descent against the soul's objections to a cemetery (e.g., "Cemeteries"), and ultimately to death. For Blanche, that journey down is a katabasis navigated by her own demon of desire, as when she tells Stella: "A man like that is someone to go out with—once—twice—three times when the devil is in you" (509). Williams would later underscore Blanche's self-reflective statement, revealing in his Memoirs that Blanche "was a demonic creature, the size of her feeling was too great for her to contain without the escape of madness" (235).

The use of three different myths, exhibiting the same narrative *and* conceptual pattern, is consistent with Williams's habitual, overdetermined use of symbols. In his foreword to *Camino Real*, he writes, "I can't deny that I use a lot of those things called symbols but . . . symbols are nothing but the natural speech of drama" (*Camino Real* 745). In the foreword, he mentions "archetypes," "constructing another world," "outside of time," "allegory," "fairy tale," "good and evil," "painstaking design," and "conscious attention to form" (745–45). Thus, all three myths follow the same dramatic logic: desire leads to error (sin) leads to death. What makes the Christian interpretation dominant over the Platonic and Poe's is that it provides a specific vocabulary and conceptual landscape for each level of the three-storied hierarchy.

Blanche's journey from Belle Reve begins in May and likewise ends in October, as in Poe's poem, near a cemetery, a field of tombs. Here, as in Poe's poem, she confronts the memory of a dead lover as the cause of her present position in the underworld of Elysian Fields. Blanche tells Mitch that "DuBois" means "woods" and combined with "Blanche" means "white woods" (499). There is a sense in which Blanch is self-encoded: she is the "white" ghoul—one of Edith Hamilton's "shadows"—who haunts herself through her actions. Read from the template of a Christian or Platonic perspective, the pattern is consistent and portrays the downfall of the soul. Read from the perspective of Williams's encoded structure using Poe's poem, the pattern is conclusively identical.

Scene five represents the climax of Blanche's hopes. In response to Stella's question, "Blanche, do you want *him*?" Blanche had desperately replied: "I want to *rest*! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes—I *want* Mitch . . . very *badly*!" (517). Mitch gives her hope when he says at the end of scene six, "You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be—you and me, Blanche?" Blanche exclaims: "Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!" (529). This scene captures Blanche's one redemptive possibility. In an insightful analysis, Bert Cardullo explains that Mitch's name is "derived from Michael, meaning 'someone like God' in Hebrew" (34). Cardullo illuminates the most difficult syntactical problem in the play because the statement makes no sense without the etymological explanation that is attributable to Williams's biblical knowledge. That apparent answer to prayer transforms Mitch "quickly" and surprisingly from a lower world "dancing bear" (500) into a possible savior, "someone like God" whom Blanche wants "*very* badly."

However, because of Stanley's intervention, Mitch fails to come to dinner on her birthday. The realization that he learns about her past from Stanley drives Blanche to drink heavily. Scene nine begins with her in full *deshabille*, wearing a sin-colored "scarlet satin robe," uncovered physically and morally. Mitch shows up, unshaven, in "uncouth apparel," and drunk. He, too, is transformed by his own brutal desire and Blanche "looks fearfully" as "he stalks into the bedroom" (542). To this point, "stalk" is a word reserved only for Stanley, but

Mitch reveals his predatory nature as a "bear" and violently rips the paper shade off the light bulb. This first "rape" of the paper lantern foreshadows the scene in which Stanley rapes Blanche.

Then, in perhaps the most revealing speech illuminating her spiritual position, Blanche's memory revives when a Mexican woman outside the apartment cries "Flores para los muertos." Blanche muses: "Death—I used to sit here and she used to sit over there and death was as close as you are. . . . The opposite is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder?" (547). The conflation of death and desire points to the textual basis for Freudian interpretations as Blanche invokes a conflict between her *thanatos* and *eros* drives. However, the context is Christian. It is All Saints Eve—Halloween—and the woman is selling flowers for the Day of the Dead when flowers are laid in petition at the Virgin Mary's feet. The holiday coincides with All Saints and All Souls Day. Symbolically, the flowers are for Blanche whose conscience has become "ghoul-haunted" by Allan Grey's ghost in Elysian Fields.

Scene ten shows Blanche a few hours later "drinking fairly steadily." Her wardrobe trunk, yawning like a grave, has flowered dresses strewn over it. Stanley, who has also been drinking, enters, goes to the bedroom, and "crouches" to find his pajamas. His shadow throws a "grotesque and menacing form" on the wall (553). The overdetermined description of the shadow again echoes Hamilton's Elysian Fields where, "the underworld is vague, a shadowy place inhabited by shadows" (42).

Outside are heard "inhuman voices like cries in a jungle" (553). Blanche goes to the window and watches in distress as she observes a sordid, lower world scene: a prostitute has robbed a drunk. He pursues her, they struggle, and a voracious vagabond "roots" through what they left behind. The scene paints a picture of a fallen world in which there is neither redemption nor escape, where it is safe neither inside nor outside.

Blanche picks up the phone and in an incoherent manner attempts to contact the outside world. Like an animal with nowhere to go she cries out: "Help me! Caught in a trap. Caught— Oh!" Stanley appears from the bathroom grinning lasciviously. The sound

of the piano music turns into the impending doom of an approaching locomotive and Blanche, uncovered and unprotected, also "crouches" like an animal, connecting her linguistically to Stanley's animal nature just as Mitch was connected to Stanley by the word "stalks" in scene nine. Blanche, driven to a desperate act of self-defense, breaks a bottle and threatens Stanley with it. Stanley disdains her feeble attempt to acquire "claws" with the bottle's jagged edge and completes the play's theme of "cat" imagery with a Blakean chant of: "Tiger—tiger!" (553–55).

Blanche's unwilling transition into an animal dwelling among other animals is complete with the rape scene.[5] Her brutal desire had brought her to a place where she is "trapped" with brutes worse than herself, to a jungle where the human desire for companionship has been degraded into an animal desire of predatory lust. This is the moment when Blanche—having already lost "God's image"—also loses her human image and reaches the nadir of her journey by becoming an animal herself.

III. The Unforgivable Sin

> *Blanche*: "He implored my forgiveness. But some things are not forgivable. Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable. It is the one unforgivable thing in my opinion and it is the one thing of which I have never been guilty."
>
> Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.
> Matthew 12:31

Blanche's scriptural phrasing in the epigram above constitutes the basis of the "unforgivable thing" as a theological reference to

[5]Williams portrayed the men as animals, referring to Mitch as a "bear"; to Steve, as a "goat"; and to Stanley, variously, as "brute," "sub-human," "bestial," "animal," "howling," "hound," "whelp," "ape," "goat," "pig, and "swine." Additionally, Stanley's *movements* are animal-like: he "stalks," he "crouches," he moves "stealthily," and he "springs."

the famous exception of an "unforgivable" sin found in Matthew 12:31, repeated in Mark 3:29, and alluded to in 1 John 5:16. The concept of an "unforgivable sin" is a key text in Christian theology as it posits that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the one sin that *cannot* be forgiven. In biblical times, "blasphemy" ("slander") against the king was a crime punishable by death. However, slander against other individuals also entails the severest consequences as when Jesus states, "that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:28 ERV).

The three degrees of condemnation in that passage (judgment, council, hell) reflect the three stages of Blanche's katabasis: 1) moral judgment in the community; 2) procedural justice by the high school principal; and 3) her temporal punishment in the extended, purgatorial "hell" whose time begins with Blanche's prostitution at the Hotel Flamingo (if not earlier) and carries her into Elysian Fields.

Although Blanche forgives herself for losing Belle Reve, and even obliquely blames Stella, she cannot forgive herself for what she did to Allan. It is in that sense that her sin is "unforgivable," resulting in a punishment that accords with the theology of a Christian purgatory that employs a purifying "fire" ("Purgatory"). Williams codes her body and environment so that she arrives "hot and tired and dirty"; hears the tamale man calling out "Red-hot!"; says, "I feel so hot and frazzled"; is present when Stanley observe the temperature is "100 on the nose"; and is raped by Stanley while a "hot trumpet" raises the temperature to a hellish extreme (474, 492, 494, 529, 555).

These may seem like random references, but it is the kind of diction that Williams uses in his plays and stories to portray the lower story of his narratives, most obviously in *The Purification* (1946) "I burned! I burned! I burned!" (50) and *Auto-da-Fé* (1946), where Eloi says "Condemn it, I say, and purify it with fire!" (363). In *Not About Nightingales* (1938), Williams portrays an actual event in which authorities locked striking prisoners in a hot room lined with radiators and "four died from temperatures approaching 150 degrees" (*Letters*, vol. 1,

135). In *Orpheus Descending*, Lady cries out, "I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell!" (*Orpheus* 91). In *The Night of the Iguana*, Shannon equates the setting in Mexico with Hell: "Why did I say 'tropical'? Hell!" (*Night* 423). In Williams's plays and short stories, heat represents passion, purification, or purgatorial persecution, and sometimes all three, as in *Streetcar*.

Blanche makes the speech about the "unforgivable thing" moments before she is raped by Stanley, coding the rape as punishment for all her past sins of fornication, mendacity, profligacy, and deliberate cruelty. She lies even as she says "I have never been guilty" because she has been haunted all along by the memory of Allan Grey's suicide from the moment she heard the fatal shot at the dance. She tells Mitch, "I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle—" (546). But for Mitch it is the issue of her deceit that is unforgivable for him, just as Allan Grey's deceit was more than Blanche could forgive. With Mitch goes Blanche's last possibility of escape.

The idea of "deliberate cruelty" was a long-standing one in Williams's thinking and occurs in at least three other places over the course of thirty-seven years that I have been able to document. In 1936, Williams wrote in his journal about the behavior of his sister Rose in one of her "neurotic sprees." Williams thought it "disgusting" that she trailed "around the house in negligees." Guilt-stricken, he repented later and "asked God's forgiveness" (*Letters*, vol. 1, 92). On another occasion in 1937, he records his response after Rose tattled on him for partying with his friends: "I went down the stairs as Rose was coming up them. We passed each other on the landing and I turned upon her like a wildcat and I hissed at her: 'I hate the sight of your ugly old face!'" (likewise, Williams refers to Blanche as a "wildcat"). In the scene with Mitch, Blanche reveals her identical sin of disgusted cruelty: "I saw! I know! You disgust me . . ." (529). Finally, reflecting in his *Memoirs* in 1973 Williams writes, "I have never blamed anyone for anything but deliberate cruelty, for there has always been in me the conviction of Blanche, that 'deliberate cruelty is the one unforgivable thing'" (122, 170). The convergence of Williams's theological knowledge and his past transgressions climax

in that key speech by Blanche. Together, they comprise a confessional commentary on his own behavior and what he feels constitutes a fatal transgression in relations.

Blanche's subsequent experience with the dying relatives, her innumerable love affairs, her gross indiscretion with a student, her loss of Belle Reve, her prostitution, each succeeding sin of desire and disaster drives her further down the path of self-destruction and away from "being made in God's image." Like the locomotive that haunts her waking moments, an impending sense of catastrophe follows her everywhere that no amount of dissipation could obliterate. The moral consequences of her deliberate cruelty eventually places her in a position where others, like Mitch, would be cruel to her.

In scene nine, when Mitch tears the paper lantern off the light bulb Blanche utters a "frightened gasp" and tries to reassure herself: "Of course you don't really mean to be insulting!" (545). Mitch tries to force himself on her, rejects her desperate offer of marriage, and storms out of the apartment, leaving Blanche to sink into an alcoholic abyss. That act of deliberate cruelty by Mitch is what makes it possible for Stanley to complete Blanche's destruction with his own devastating brand of deliberate cruelty.

Nonetheless, for all their cruelty—physical, emotional, and psychological—neither Stanley's nor Mitch's actions would have succeeded in completely demeaning Blanche's spiritual nature had Stella remained by her side. Even at the end, when Blanche is clearly traumatized by some event, Stella would not believe her. It is then that Stanley, impatient with the progress of Blanche's packing, strides into the bedroom and tears the paper lantern off the light bulb. Blanche cries out "as if the lantern was herself" (a Barthesian coding reconfigured as "spiritual" body) and Stella, unable to bear Stanley's final cruelty, runs out to the balcony. This final humiliation of Blanche is what breaks Stella's reserve of denial and in her last speeches she reveals an incriminating awareness of her own guilt that echoes the judgement of Cain: "Oh, my God, Eunice help me! Don't let them do that to her, don't let them hurt her! Oh, God, oh, please God, don't hurt her! . . . What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?" (562).

Stella's epiphanic moment, her realization that hers is a Judas-act of betrayal, renders her plea and her prayer ineffective, for she had admitted earlier that "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley" (556). Given a choice between caring for a sister who had been brutally raped or remaining with the man who had raped her, Stella chooses to have Blanche committed to an asylum, compounding every harm that Blanche has suffered until then. Had Stella reacted with outrage toward Stanley and with love toward Blanche, had she moved out of the apartment and taken Blanche with her, Blanche likely would have recovered. Perhaps Mitch, moved by a sense of his own sin of cruelty, might have married Blanche and have taken care of Stella and the baby as well. Perhaps, but in the underworld of Elysian Fields, Stanley alone has the power to save or to condemn; no redemptive action is possible without his consent. Earlier, Stanley had reminded Blanche and Stella that he is lord of Elysian Fields: "I am the king around here, so don't forget it!" (537).

At play's end, Stanley, Stella, and the baby form a fantastic tableau that replaces the Christian trinity, and even replaces Blanche's triune humanism of art, poetry, and music, with a trio of fallen humanity. As Blanche walks away without a backward glance, Stella "cries out her sister's name from where she is crouched a few steps up on the stairs" (563). Stella sobs with "inhuman abandon" as Stanley comes out. Gone with Blanche is every memory of Belle Reve, of a better life, and what remains of Stella's surrender is a bestial relationship without beauty, without Blanche's "magic," and, ultimately, without humanity. As Stella sobs, Stanley makes a brutish attempt to give comfort by slipping his fingers through the "opening of her blouse" (563). By this shockingly coarse image, Williams graphically demonstrates the brutal base of their relations. When last seen, she is "crouched" outdoors like an animal, huddled with Stanley on the porch of their broken world. However, unlike Blanche, they are incapable of realizing their world is "broken" in a spiritual or an aesthetic sense. They inhabit—not so much a postmodern—as a posthuman world, a world inhabited by what Blanche correctly identified as a "sub-human" species.

IV. Redemption

Williams's comments on the ending are indeterminate: "I have no idea what happens to Blanche after the play ends. I know she was shattered. And the meaning of the play is that this woman who was potentially a superior person . . . was broken by society" (*Conversations* 81). That information is something but not enough. We already know she is broken; the question is, to what degree?

Based on her being taken to an asylum, an academic question is posed in the critical literature as to whether Stanley's rape has driven Blanche insane. Jacqueline O'Connor compares Blanche with other "madwomen" such as Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*. Nina Liebman observes that "Madness is the punishment for entering the male territory of expressive desire" (30, 31). On the other hand, Felicia Londre raises doubts: "Although most critics seem to accept the premise that Blanche goes mad, it is possible to interpret . . . that she finds a way to salvage her dignity" (61).

I think it is indisputable in the last scene that Blanche did "salvage her dignity." She walks out the door on the arm of the doctor who treated her like the lady she believed herself to be. In theoretical terms, she did not *retain* a paper ontology. That illusion—her ultimate punishment—was destroyed by Stanley by the actual and symbolic rapes. Nonetheless, although Blanche is going to an asylum, Williams is not signifying insanity. Williams had spent time in an asylum after his lover Frank Merlo's death; his mother had spent time in an asylum (which she drolly informed Williams was a "horrible mistake");[6] and, of course, his poor sister Rose had spent decades in asylums, suffering a lobotomy in the process. In an interview with Studs Terkel in 1961, Williams expressed a hopeful epistemology: "I think people always find kindness. I think even in asylums one can find kindness if

[6]Williams recounts in his Memoirs how he received a phone call from her while he was vacationing in the Virgin Islands. "Guess where I am?" "Why, Mother, aren't you at home?" "No, son. A horrible mistake has been made. I have been put in a psychiatric ward. Please come at once and get me right out of here." (116).

one is willing to give it" (*Conversations* 81). As with the fluidity of gender and the spiritual body in Williams's works, a character's "sanity" is not to be read literally. In his *Memoirs* he cautions readers about the fluidity of even sanity:

> You have your own separate world and your own separate standards of sanity to go with it. Most of you belong to something that offers a stabilizing influence: a family unit, a defined social position, employment in an organization, a more secure habit of existence. I live like a gypsy, I am a fugitive. No place seems tenable to me for long anymore, not even my own skin. Sane and insane are legal terms. (247)

Like Williams, his protagonists are of "the fugitive kind," hence the importance of kindness from strangers. When the doctor arrives on the scene as the last actor in a happenstance series of events, he finds a victim who has been mugged by life, so to speak, lying by the wayside. When the matron suggests the violent coercion of a strait jacket, the doctor's response is antithetical: "He takes off his hat and now he becomes personalized. The unhuman quality goes. His voice is gentle and reassuring as he crosses to Blanche and crouches in front of her" (563).

The doctor's palliative is kindness not confinement. Using a Christian double entendre, Williams describes how the doctor "crosses to Blanche" and stoops to lift her to his level, symbolizing the possible beginning of her ascent. Like the Good Samaritan, he stops to help a fellow human being in the only way it is possible to do so in those circumstances. The sudden display of gentility from the doctor is the positive restorative that Williams gives to Blanche as a sign of future hopefulness in her famous speech that echoes his later interview: "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (563). It is that gesture that makes it possible for Blanche to turn her back on Stella and Elysian Fields because she is leaving it and going to where people will be *institutionally* kind to her. Institutional manners of class define the gentile code of the South and the doctor's assumption of the gallant mode when he addresses her as "Miss DuBois" signals to

her that she will be among her own kind again. That her destination is an "asylum" constitutes a step up from the purgatorial punishment of Elysian Fields and indicates a redemptive movement—a trope in many of Williams's stories and plays—to the third "story" of Blanche's journey.

The clues for redemptive moments in Williams are found in symbols of speech, dramaturgical patterns, or set designs, as in *Camino Real*'s three-storied layout which consists of the life of wealth, the life of poverty, and the life of fictive creativity. The setting of *Camino Real* undisguisedly reflects Williams's diegetics that he spells out in the introduction. He describes the characters as "mostly archetypes of certain basic attitudes and qualities with those mutations that would occur if they had continued along the road to this hypothetical terminal point" (743). The escape of Kilroy and Quixote, like Blanche's, is an archetypal middle way to redemption that rejects the false dream life of "the luxury side of the street" (e.g. Belle Reve), as well as the sordid reality of "Skid Row" (e.g. Elysian Fields), and chooses the ascendant ideal of eros and art (749).

Consequently, in light of Williams's comments about asylums, one should read Blanche's exit as the suggestion of an *improved* condition: the beginning of an *anabasis* to an alternate, life-giving world. While Blanche can never return to the upper story of Belle Reve or to her former status as a teacher, her escape from the lower story of Elysian Fields is a resurrection from the "miserable dream" of purgatorial suffering. In Blanche's case, a "horrible mistake" has been made. Blanche is traumatized, not crazy. An argument can be made for her being the sanest person in Elysian Fields by dint of her value system. Every character in *Streetcar* has exhausted their possibility for growth and reached what Williams calls their "hypothetical terminal point," except Blanche.

Williams writes, "Blanche DuBois has a natural elegance, a love of the beautiful, a romantic attitude toward life" (*Conversations* 45). For what it's worth, the construction of natural elegance, love of the beautiful, and romantic attitude aligns with Plato's tripartite description of the highest level of human who is "a seeker after wisdom or beauty, a follower of the Muses and a lover . . ." (495). Williams's

dramaturgical architecture of heaven, purgatory, and a final return to normalcy are evident in Blanche's speech:

> Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image, but Stella—my sister—there has been some progress since then! Such things as art—as poetry and music—such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! . . . In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching. . . . *Don't—don't hang back with the brutes!* (511).

Although Blanche's past behavior positions her a long way from the *imago Dei*, she did not hang back with the brutes. She fell from an upper story ontology of being made in "God's image" to an aesthetic existentialism of "art . . . poetry and music." Those things could not save her in Elysian Fields. Nonetheless, at play's end Blanche retains the aesthetic components of a beautiful world in her dress, bearing, and mode of speech. The essential elements of her *person* are affirmed; it is the "reality" of Elysian Fields that is insane, much in the same way that Robert Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) critiques the received narrative of Phaedrus' reality: "The mythos. The mythos is insane. That's what he believed. The mythos that says the forms of this world are real but the Quality of this world is unreal, that is insane" (361).

Blanche had rejected the "forms" of both Belle Reve and Elysian Fields. Her existential modality of "Quality"—art, poetry, and music—can only survive in a world of like creatives who affirm not only her cultural values but the *type* of person she is, a type that could not survive in the alternate two stories that society offers in either wealth or poverty.

Williams reflects on the conflict between his characters and their society, writing: "I hadn't thought of them as being hopeless. That's not really what I was writing about. It's human valor that moves me. The one dominant theme in most of my writings, the most magnificent thing in all human nature, is valor" (*Conversations* 14). The essence of modern tragedy is not a hopeless fall into oblivion through sin but a struggle against overwhelming odds.

Bert Cardullo characterizes Blanche's katabasis as a "Christian tragedy" (91). I agree that it is Christian but not a tragedy in a conventional sense about a person. Rather, it is the tragedy of a type. As an individual, Blanche is not tragic like Antigone, Oedipus, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, or Othello. Those characters do not survive their fatal flaws and subsequent ordeals. Blanche is also not tragic like Willie in *Death of a Salesman* (1949) or Jim in *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956). It is interesting that both those works benefit formally from the precedent of *Streetcar* but not from its redemptive moral. Blanche, like Nora in *A Doll's House*, survives her ordeal. She has the "valor" to transcend her Prufrockian moment of crisis. She descends to the underworld, survives its monsters, and ascends from her purgatorial trial to a middle world of normalcy where sanity and insanity at least have legal definitions and boundaries of behavior. In the end, Blanche accomplishes a Christian redemption through suffering.

Reading the structure of *Streetcar* through the play's biblical devices sheds light on the unique scriptural diction ("unforgivable thing"), trinitarian patterning ("art, poetry, and music"), archetypal Christian symbolism (heaven/hell), and, most importantly, in the theological process described in the Epistle of James in which temptation leads to an unforgivable sin which results in a spiritual death. Although Blanche's transformation into a "wild-cat" transfigures her *imago Dei* into a beast that preys on children, she is ultimately saved from herself and her purgatorial fate by the doctor who "crosses" her path to redeem her like a savior.

When *Streetcar* appeared in 1947, God had been dead for half a century, two world wars had killed millions of people, and the world had suffered a devastating economic depression. Modernism's progress from "being made in God's image" to hopeful teleologies of Darwinism, Marxism, and Freudian solutions had been exhausted. The literature of mid-century was a literature of despair and *nausée*. Characters in fiction committed suicide, became addicted, or went mad, as did some of their authors. What is called Williams's romantic vision is actually Williams's eschatological Christian optimism. In a world where the material alternatives of wealth and poverty are equally

soul-crushing, Blanche's salvation—and, by extension, the salvation of all the archetypal Blanches inhabiting the "broken world" of Hart Crane's epigram—is Williams's message in the play. The latent Christianity of *Streetcar* that has for seventy-odd years eluded critical evaluation expresses itself as a ringing vehicle of hope filtered through salvific analogs of art, poetry, and music.

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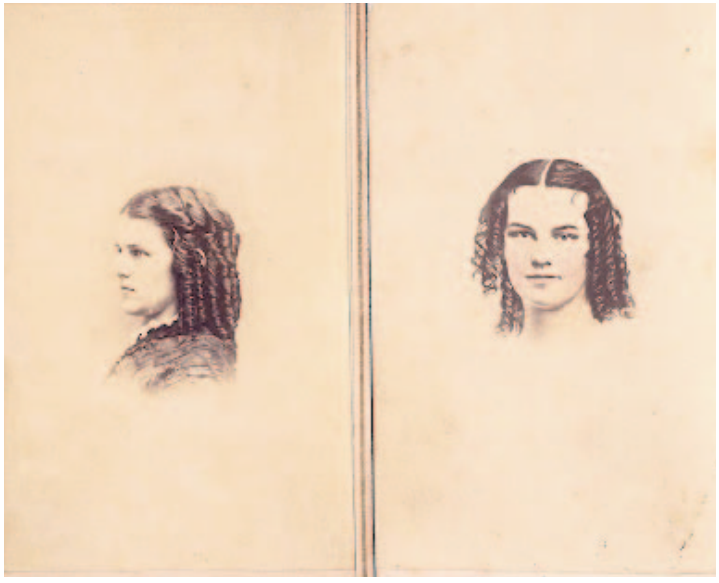

Rebecca Harding Davis

"Who Cares?": On *Caritas* and a Case for Christian Naturalism in Rebecca Harding Davis's "The Promise of the Dawn"

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Rebecca Harding Davis eschews traditional canonical categorization. Her writing style is often described as realist, naturalist, regionalist, romanticist, sentimentalist, or a combination of any of these genres. Sharon M. Harris, who published a breakthrough study in 1991 titled *Rebecca Harding Davis and American Realism*, reminded scholars in an essay published twenty years later that defining Davis as a realist only neglects to consider that Davis was actually quite "diverse in her choice of genres" (291). That is, Harris's trailblazing recovery of Davis's work was not meant to limit the author to a single identity as a realist but to open the possibilities of her expansive oeuvre to literary scholars. In a 2003 essay on Davis, Sara Britton Goodling pursues one such interpretation, describing Davis's "Life in the Iron-Mills" as a "battlefield on which American literary naturalism and American sentimentalism struggle" (2). She suggests that Davis uses sentimental tropes—focusing often on young women characters—to effect change in social and political realms regarding gender, race, and class, while at the same time Davis "anticipate[s] naturalism" with its focus on the experiences of the lower classes and the negative, external determining

pressures that make the results of the characters' lives seem already foregone conclusions (4). Likewise, Donna M. Campbell in her 2016 *Bitter Tastes: Literary Naturalism and Early Cinema in American Women's Writing* asserts that Davis "anticipate[s] . . . the concerns of naturalists in [the] use of the aesthetics of disgust, the discovery of squalor-sequence, and the transformation of sentiment through the transmission of affect" (63). Ultimately, she defines Davis as a "grim realist," which, to her, renders Davis a proponent of "a form of unruly naturalism" in which sentimentality is used to undercut the severest naturalist literary tendencies (i.e. violence, misery, and disgust) that proliferate in her writing (25).[1]

What connects scholars in their attempts to categorize Davis is an acceptance that at least in some regard she is a writer with naturalist tendencies; significantly, those tendencies occur almost thirty years prior to the usually understood late-nineteenth-century turn toward naturalism in the American literary tradition. (This anachronism suggests Davis's alignment with realism, as Sharon M. Harris originally ascribes to her.) Beyond an acknowledgment of Davis's naturalist orientation, scholars generally concur that Davis incorporates sentimentalism at key points in her writing. I suggest that these moments of tension—when Davis resists naturalistic impulses and leans into sentimental ones—are usually the moments when she is moralizing to her audience, in essence pleading with them to make a harsh world less harsh via active Christian resistance. In this essay, I argue that Davis is primarily a naturalist writer, but she is also simultaneously a Christian one. Though this categorization may at first seem incompatible, it is also at once obvious. That she is Christian is

[1]Because Davis wrote prolifically for five decades (1861 to 1904), classifying her writing in one genre alone would prove not only difficult but also futile; I seek only to open another interpretive frame. Further, I acknowledge strict categorization is reductive to nineteenth-century women writers who have often been defined by their gender solely. In "Women Writers and Naturalism," Campbell asserts that naturalist writers especially have been traditionally classified as male, while "women writers" of the same timeframe have been defined by the fact that they are women (i.e. women writers have not usually been labeled naturalist writers) (223).

clear in her writing; that she is naturalist is also clear. Yet considering how these two vastly different worldviews intersect in Davis has not heretofore been explored in any targeted way. Davis understands that the world around her is increasingly naturalist—a world wherein the poor and downtrodden are often offered little hope or afforded little agency. At the same time, beneath her stories lies a sense of Christian promise. While humans may be bowing to secularism more and more, they do not have to; at any moment, they could choose to act otherwise. This consistent tension between the world as it is and the world as it ought to be in Davis's writing is what makes her writing, as I term it, Christian naturalism.

In mid-nineteenth-century America, Davis was contending with the advent of Darwinism and a rapidly industrializing world filled with violence, struggle, and upheaval: she invites her readers to break with what she perceives as an increasingly unsympathetic culture and instead to demonstrate overt care for those who most need it. In this way, Davis accepts that naturalism is a permutation of humanity that cannot be denied, yet it is one that could and ought to be mitigated through Christian love, or charity. To accept that the world is lived out one way (i.e naturalist) does not mean that one cannot simultaneously hope that it is another (i.e. Christian). As scholars like those mentioned above have noted, Davis evades genre purity, and when she breaks with form, it is usually sentimentalism that appears in the creases of an otherwise naturalist story. Yet genre slippage does not occur because Davis veers haphazardly from one form to another without adhering to a single position; rather it occurs because she intersperses religious language during moments when she reminds readers that the burdened people she describes deserve Christian love. This religious language has been identified as sentimental, as a genre break, that is, rather than as a purposeful decision by Davis to consolidate Christianity with an acknowledgement of America's bleak socio-political climate in the 1860s and afterward. Though her stratagems may be rightly identified as sentimental, they are also always Christian—thus she does not use sentimental emotion for its own sake but with a directed intent to elicit Christian love. Keith Newlin suggests that "didacticism and sensationalism" are already "inherent

in naturalism," claiming even that "[Jack] London, [Frank] Norris, and [Theodore] Dreiser . . . employed the narrative devices of melodrama as an efficacious means to convince readers of the truth of their theses and to elicit sympathy for their protagonists" (6). What marks these later-nineteenth-century writers as different from Davis, then, is not that she often lapses into sentimentalism, whereas they do not. Rather, it is that she is Christian, and that they are not. Although it might be said that Davis is a naturalist who uses sentimentalism, the same can be said of most naturalist writers. The reason Davis's naturalist writing reads differently, then, is the Christian lens behind it.

This essay contains two parts: it describes Davis's unique understanding of Christian love, or charity, as the answer to the United States' increasingly naturalist perspective. Then, it examines Davis's "The Promise of the Dawn" (1863), a short story that centers on a fallen young woman in dire need of assistance, analyzing how Davis suffuses a decidedly naturalist story with Christian allegorical subtext. Set during the Civil War, "The Promise of the Dawn" accentuates the disruption and sheer brutality that was pervasive in the United States when Davis was writing and suggests readers could heal their culture, if only they were to pause, reflect, and then demonstrate Christian love to one another. Without a naturalist framework, this story's Christian thesis would feel altogether less urgent. "The belief that nature's laws are comprehendible and inevitable . . . extend[s] to the naturalist novel," Newlin also writes when considering the aesthetics of naturalism (10). Certainly, Davis seems to believe that the world is shifting toward despair, pessimism, and a loss of humanity and that it is her responsibility to illustrate this shift, yet, importantly, she also believes that God's law can easily combat this shift—that nature's laws are first God's laws—if only her readers would heed her guidance to them.

Christianity, Naturalism, and the Salvation of Love

In one of the best studies of Davis's Christian worldview, Robin L. Cadwallader suggests that the central concern of Davis was to impress upon her readers the need for the theological virtue of *caritas*:

> According to *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, the Latin *caritas* (charity) and the Greek ἀγάπη (love) merged in English to become "charity," which refers to "Christian love" or the act of showing "God's love to man." Cross-referencing the two (charity and love), the *OED* puts forth that this kind of "love" is seen in "the affection of one created being to another so far as it is prompted by the sense of their common relationship to God." Tracing the connection between charity and love through "Wycliff and the Rhemish version" of the Bible, which "regularly rendered the Vulgate *dilectio* by 'love' [and] *caritas* by 'charity,'" the *OED* establishes that all instances of the word "charity" were changed to "love" in the 1881 Revised Version; thus, what was once translated as "faith, hope, and charity" became "faith, hope, and love" in the many renditions of scripture that followed . . . Davis . . . equated love with charity in their reform efforts, and in adopting the last part of the above scripture verse—"the greatest of these is charity/love"—they sought to restore charity to a cultural enterprise that was becoming increasingly more institutionalized and impersonal. (113–14)

I include this long quote from Cadwallader because it speaks to Davis's distinctive Christian vision, one that was being challenged in mid- and late-nineteenth-century America. Davis believed individuals could and should do whatever possible to help those in need, especially the poor. She did not write with the idea, though, that more institutions might form to help those individuals. Instead, she felt as if the sudden propagation of such institutions separated the classes rather than bringing them together. It might be interpreted as easy to give to a charity, to tell someone to go a poor house or to a Magdalene home, or to give money to efforts without ever necessarily participating in *caritas* as an act of Christian formation. The types of organized reform efforts that were increasingly common in the latter part of the nineteenth century were perceived by Davis as potentially undercutting *caritas* and transforming a society built on Christian love into a secular society built on government and corporate interventions.

For Davis, philanthropy and its hierarchical attendant power structures constructed a wall between human connection and God, a wall she believed would inevitably lead to less, not more, real charity for those in need. A society in which God is no longer in control of one's destiny but organizations are—even when it comes to showing love to one another and giving hope to the poor—feels increasingly deterministic. Thus, Davis was able to perceive what she saw as the encroaching dangers of a naturalist worldview playing out in front of her, and her fiction sought to contend with this reality, not simply show it. In a 7 January 1877 editorial in *The New York Tribune* titled "Indiscriminate Charity," Davis clarifies that she fears "humanity" might be lost in "organized charity." Importantly, she uses the story of a mother whose child dies while she is begging on the streets as her case in point, asserting there needs to be "help for men's souls as well as their bodies." Jails and tenement halls are already filled, she argues, and Christians turn blind eyes to street beggars because they feel they are doing enough by donating to and then relying on organizations to meet the needs of the poor:

> There is no use in discussing this especial case any longer—the baby is dead, the mother is left with her drunken husband to console her, and the Christian women who turned a deaf ear to her cry for pity the other night satisfy themselves, no doubt, with the reflection that the police were to blame, who should have arrested her for street-begging.

Davis emphasizes that this woman's child could have been saved had just one person reached out to the poor mother. Instead, the police force will be blamed for not putting the woman in jail. An organization, not a human, will be held responsible. "Now what is needed?" Davis inquires, "To me, it seems, mere direct individual intercourse between the classes." Here lies the preeminent point of Davis's argument. When ceding charity to organizations, the love affiliated with giving is obscured. Philanthropy, or love for one's brother, is, in truth, an economic transaction only. One might never see or feel the need of the person one is giving to; thus, the classes

are separated into two groups—those who have money to give and those who are the recipients of the money. There is also an indebtedness that ostensibly occurs because of this transaction; if people give to groups rather than to individuals, then they may begin to believe that entire groups are indebted to them. In turn, those groups might eventually become resentful of the expectations imposed on them. The worst of human nature might surface because there is no specific moment, no "direct individual intercourse," when one person simply looks at another and provides whatever is needed because there is an acknowledgment that they are equal in God's eyes. As Jeroen J. H. Dekker conveys, "[P]hilanthropy is aimed at horizontal goals; it was directed to the well-being of the people. The final goal of its Christian counterpart [charity] was a vertical one; it was a directed to God" (qtd. in Cadwallader 130 n. 7). Philanthropy therefore, is social in nature, whereas *caritas*, or exhibiting love one-on-one to fulfill one's faith in the benevolence of God, is inherently theological.

It is precisely in moments when the theological virtue of *caritas* is proffered as an answer to the lived reality of a naturalist world that I noted the slippage into sentimentalist rhetoric that scholars have identified as part of Davis's naturalist writing. For Davis, naturalism may be the way of the world, but it should not contain the world's values. As Sara Britton-Goodling and Donna M. Campbell have astutely suggested, Davis often employs sentimental rhetorical flourishes, and I add that the moments that are described as sentimental care less about the genre specifications necessarily than about the Christian vision behind the rhetoric being used. Perhaps because religion is implicitly based on feeling—faith after all is feeling a belief in God without tangible proof—it has in the case of Davis's writing become synonymous with sentimentalism as a genre holistically. In other words, when Davis employs sentimentalism in her writing, she is usually simply exhibiting her Christian worldview. In this worldview, it is the individual who can change the system with charity—but charity—the act of love in and of itself—has transitioned during and following the span of the American Civil War to be regarded as outmoded; for Davis, love toward the other must be restored for the world to resist the pull to turn away from God and be subsumed by the worst of human nature.

For instance, the narrator sets up the backdrop of Davis's most famous short story, "Life in the Iron-Mills," she reports that the mill workers suffer "the disease of their class." Their lives are "terrifying":

> A reality of soul-starvation, of living death, that meets you every day under the besotted faces on the street,—I can paint nothing of this, only give you the outside outlines of a night, a crisis in the life of one man: whatever muddy depth of soul-history lies beneath you can read according to the eyes God has given you.

The language here is naturalist: the underclass is described as "diseased" merely because they are poor, and their faces look "besotted," or drunk. Yet Davis states that she is going to tell the story of one soul, one person, and she is asking the reader, just one other person, to use: "the eyes God has given you," to break through the "reality of soul-starvation." Davis asks her individual readers to stop lumping the poor into a group where one cannot be distinguished from the other. They are each human, and one-on-one human love—*caritas*—can make a difference, if only one uses "God" as her eyes and not the eyes of the secular world that has already separated the classes to make it harder to sympathize with those who need it. While her aside to the reader may be described as sentimental, perhaps trying to get her readers to "feel right," as sentimental author Harriet Beecher Stowe famously stated to be her goal with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it is first and foremost a moment of religious inflection on a naturalist worldview (317).

The call to *caritas* that Davis invokes at the beginning of "Life" is inspired by the New Testament. In Matthew 22.36–40, Jesus famously links loving God to loving one's neighbor. When asked which is the "Greatest Commandment," Jesus responds, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." He then declares, "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If organizations take over showing God's love through the impersonal care for others, then these commandments would not be met. Organizations tend to

dehumanize the Other. Showing love for one's neighbor manifests God's love on Earth, and that cannot be done via a third party. Once human connection is lost, then so, too, is the promise of God's kingdom. According to Benjamin G. Sammons,

> [s]cientific philanthropy' emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century declaring that empirical investigation, not theological reflection, offered the best knowledge of poverty. . . . [With] the advent of scientific philanthropy . . . new explanations for poverty [emerged], including the moralist doctrine that the vices of the poor caused their deprivation. (63)

The poor become a body of people who are not deemed to be as deserving as others because their class status stigmatizes them as less than human. The lack of one-on-one contact only served to heighten this notion and make it seem as if it were so. With this in mind, studying Davis's treatment of characters in need reveals that she considered naturalism a byproduct of scientific philanthropy; naturalist proponents, after all, are often linked by "the portrayal of human nature as circumscribed by external forces, or their use of extreme, typically urban landscapes, or their sometimes bleak challenge to any theory that posits the uniqueness of human nature and human endeavor" (Link 72). For Davis, so long as humans gravitate away from *caritas*, from showing true affection to one other, then their lives will be increasingly stratified, determined for them, and their uniqueness as God's creatures created in His image will be lost. As follows, she is a naturalist writer because she recognizes the world for what it is, yet she works to remind her readers that if they use "the eyes God has given them," then they can still change it into a better place. These parallel story strands, one representing the world with all of its flaws and the other representing the possibility of a life saved by love, characterize Davis's distinct, Christian naturalist prose. Once Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane, and others enter the picture at the end of the nineteenth century, the Christian hope found in Davis's naturalist writing disappears, averring only to the ideas of empiricism, a consequence of the changing world that Davis predicted and called readers to resist.

"The Promise of the Dawn" (1863)

Davis wrote "The Promise of the Dawn" fourteen years prior to the editorial in which she responds to the death of a real child on the streets of New York. She must not only have felt despondent but also prescient when discovering that a real-life mother had been abandoned on the streets, that no one helped that mother or her child, and the tragic consequences that had been wrought from bystanders' lack of concern. Subtitled "A Christmas Story," and holding the byline in the *Atlantic Monthly* that this tale was "by the author of 'Life in the Iron-Mills'" (published two years earlier), "The Promise of the Dawn" centers on a young prostitute, Lot. At the end of the story, she commits suicide to save her little brother, Benny, because she feels a person of her class and background can no longer offer him a life worth living. Published during the third year of the Civil War, Davis begins her tale still somewhat hopefully, writing that "though the most plentiful Harvest the States had yielded that year was one of murdered dead," the "sun gave his kindliest good night smile to the great valley of the West," "as he gave to the young, untainted world, that morning, long ago, when God blessed it, and saw that it was good. Because, you see, this was the eve of a more helpful, God-sent day than that, in spite of all the dead: Christmas Eve" (95). In its exposition, the story sets up what is arguably the greatest conflict in the text: a world that feels increasingly broken and bloody with that of a Christian optimism for the future. It sets up Christian naturalism.

Davis's story follows Lot's journey on Christmas Eve as she approaches one person after another, begging for any opportunity to make money for herself and her brother without having to resort to prostitution. She asks a concert hall manager, who rejects her, as well as her uncle Adam and his new wife Jinny, who also reject her. At the time, this couple does not realize that Lot is Adam's beloved dead sister's daughter. Davis accentuates that Adam and Jinny should have shown sympathy for Lot simply because it is the right thing to do, not because they were related to her in any way; in this way, so, too, should have the concert hall manager. Lot's constant rejection,

and later suicide, follows a naturalistic pattern wherein humans are shown to look after their own comforts first, ignoring the person in front of them either because they can claim that persona's class status makes them lesser or because they believe that person should get help elsewhere, most likely through an organization.

Davis begins the story focusing on Lot's uncle, Adam, a "lame-old" cobbler who is overcome with Christmas joy because at long last he has been blessed with a child. As he is "whistling" and feeling "tender" and "awe-struck," he stops to buy some flowers for his wife, a Christian woman named Jinny. Unexpectedly, "a young face, deadly pale, on which some awful passion had cut the lines," appears from the crowd and tries to touch the flowers. Adam strikes the woman before him, recognizing her as the local prostitute, Lot: "He struck her. A woman? Yes, if it had been a slimy eel standing upright, it would have been a less foul thing than this" (102). Though he retains the flowers, he throws them down because he does not want his wife's "pure and saintly" fingers "polluted" by any imagined transfer from Lot's (102). Adam is a working-class man, not a rich one, yet he expresses no pity for Lot, describing her as "a slimy eel" and a "foul thing," words indicating his dehumanization of her. He treats her as he would a misbehaving dog, fearing she will "contaminate" his "saintly" wife. Through gritty, naturalist language and impulsive violence, Davis shows how separated even these two classes are, emphasizing that Adam's feelings of "tenderness" on Christmas Eve are not directed outward. Instead, Adam treats Lot—the downtrodden woman in front of him—terribly. He fixates only on the selfish "joy" Christmas can bring him, his new wife, and their baby. Lot's mere existence as someone in need seems to put that joy in danger.

Significantly, while Adam does not attend church, he identifies as Christian, and on that night, Davis writes that he even felt as if an "intimate Gospel had touched him" (100). This gospel, though, seems rooted in scientific philanthropy and hence worldliness, wherein the prostitute is blamed for her situation, and not in *caritas*, wherein Adam would have felt compelled to aid Lot because he would have recognized her as a fellow child of God. Later, in a discussion with Jinny, Adam mentions in passing that there is help for

prostitutes in "Five Points," where there existed at the time a Mission House to reform those who needed it.[2] "God help them as help others this Christmas night," Adam even says to his wife, clearly believing that it is others, namely an organization, and not himself as an individual who should provide aid to "others" (106). His unkind actions toward Lot in the story's first pages bear out this truth. Thus Lot's fate appears predetermined, yet this supposed pessimistic reality could be shattered if self-proclaimed Christians like Adam and Jinny would live out their religion's doctrines.

Indeed, there is little room for doubt about the moral of Davis's story or the actions she wants her readers to take after reading it. The allegorical undertones of a young woman trying to save a child on Christmas Eve in a world described as more fallen than ever before cannot be overstated. In his theological interpretation of "Life in the Iron-Mills," Sammons finds that Davis "commends a mode of engaging the text that [he calls] incarnational reading—a real-world performance of a text's ethical imperatives" (61). Davis wants her readers not merely to feel, certainly not to shrug and turn away from her characters, but to do good in the world right then because they are invested in her characters' fictional lives. She wants her readers to act on the Christian mandates that they read in her text not by giving to some unknown agency but by changing who they are and doing more directly for each other. This interpretative frame is put in full relief when Lot enters the concert hall and begs to sing Christmas carols for money, promising that she'll stay in the back, where no one can see her: "Her tones were low, soft, from her teeth out, as I told

[2]According to Sharon M. Harris and Robin L. Cadwallader, "Five points, one of New York City's most impoverished neighborhoods, became notorious in the nineteenth century as one of the worst slums in the world. The purported goal of the Five Points Mission House, established in the 1850s by Methodist reformers, was not only to meet the physical needs of those who sought assistance, but also to lead them to Christ and instill in them the tenets of Christian living" (106 n. 10). Consult their introduction to Davis's short writing in the collection *Rebecca Harding Davis's Stories of the Civil war Era: Selected Writings from the Borderlands* for further context about Davis's life and influences during this era of her career.

you. Her soul was chained below, a young girl's soul, hardly older than your little daughter's there, who sings Sunday-school hymns for you in the evenings" (107). Notice the abrupt narrative shift in this section. Davis's narrator directly addresses her readers and likens Lot to their daughters, asking what they would do, if faced with such a request. A pull to morality, couched in a sentimental phrasing referencing Sunday school (or religion), interrupts the despondent plot of a prostitute's being refused "honest" work (106). Pumphrey, the manager, quickly turns Lot away. In a meager effort to aid her, "the negro" who works at the hall offers "kindly" to take her "to jail," but she refuses (108). Jail, not human love, is the only so-called aid Lot is offered. An institution, not a person, is presented as the answer to a young woman's poverty, and a government-run, disciplinary institution is described as kindness. Readers are called to respond and act differently to the poor and to realize that jails or organized institutions are not a solution to the world's ills born out of naturalist ideas, only human kindness born out of Christian love is.

In a brief moment of hope, Pumphrey, the manager, wavers in his decision not to help; he follows Lot, her song stirring his heart. "There's something in your face makes me heart-sick. I've a little girl of your age," he tells her when he catches up to her (109). In this moment, the manager takes over for the reader, whom Davis had previously suggested might also have a daughter like Lot; indeed, Pumphrey actually has a daughter of Lot's age, and the audience witnesses and experiences the manager's internal struggle. "I wish I could help you, girl," he tells her, "But I'm a moral man. I have to be careful of my reputation. Besides, I couldn't bring you under the same roof with my child" (109). Secularism's truth is laid bare here; for Davis, morality has been flipped on its head. To help Lot and to show caring would label a person immoral. Lot stares at the manager, telling him that "not one of those Christian women up in the town" will help her either. "There's thousands more of us," she tells Pumphrey, "Who cares"? (110). The answer Davis suggests in the ensuing silence is "no one." *Social norms* make Pumphrey embarrassed to provide Lot help even while his conscience dictates he should. Christian women have turned their backs on Lot too,

presumably because through a philanthropist's lens, like Adam, they blame her for her lowly position or her "lot" in life. To be seen with her, a prostitute, is to be contaminated by her. According to Davis, this lack of empathy is the result of a world devoid of God at the center, where the classes are separated and where organizations, not individuals, are charged with helping those in need.

Secularism results in determinism, and the prostitute ends up the unheard preacher in this story. In what is perhaps the most important textual revelation, Lot reveals to Pumphrey, "It's not for myself I'm sorry" (110). Instead, she begs for Pumphrey's help because of her brother. The prostitute in the tale is the only one who cares for someone else at the expense of herself. She says, "I don't pray, you know; but when Ben puts his white little arms about me 't nights and kisses me, somethin' says to me, 'God loves you, Lot'" (110). Here, Lot describes *caritas* in action. What she does and feels for Benny are illustrative of God's love on Earth. After this moving section when Lot acknowledges God's presence in her life, Davis writes, "The whole world spoke in the poor manager" (110). Yet "the whole world," or Pumphrey, does not offer love. "I'll give you money," he responds instead (110). In the naturalistic worldview, the answer is not love, a spiritual feeling, or even time; it is a commodified transaction, a byproduct of scientific philanthropy. With this response, Lot's face "harden[s]" and the manager doles out the following advice:

> "Lot, I'll be honest. There's no place for such as you. Those that have made you what you are hold good stations among us; but when a woman's once down, there's no raising her up."
> *"Never?"*
> "Never."
> She stood, her fair hair pushed back from her face, her eyes deadening every moment, quite quiet.
> "Good bye, Lot." (111)

As "the world speaks," it denies Lot her humanity and her godliness; it "deadens" her. Pumphrey asserts that it is those in "good stations"

who have "made" Lot, not God. It is they who ordain his actions and his morality. Lot is doomed.[3] Secular determinism has won.

To further elucidate the significance of this exchange between Pumphrey and Lot, it bears mentioning that Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, only four years prior to "The Promise of the Dawn." Davis seems to recognize that, for many, because of this landmark publication, "human nature" had come to be recognized as "a matter of biochemical interactions controlled by the coercive forces of heredity and the environment" (Link 77). Davis acknowledges the reality of this shift in social perspective, yet she still challenges her audience to read Lot's story, feel outrage at her treatment, and then act incarnationally. If Davis's readers were to put *caritas* back at the center of their own exchanges, then healing a broken world remains possible. Naturalism may be the genre she has to write in to convey nineteenth-century reality, but Christianity can change that reality. Pumphrey's decree of there "never" being hope for those "who are down," then, seems far less true if one were to refuse the naturalist premise that "heredity and environment were in charge." Unchecked, it might seem true, but Davis urges her audience to reconsider their faith in each other and thereby in God.

The one main character in "A Promise of the Dawn" whose Christianity seems to be part of her core identity is Jinny, Adam's

[3]Davis similarly cautions that demonstrating love for the poor does not equate with giving money in "Life in the Iron-Mills." John May, a doctor who visits the mill where Wolfe, an ironworker, has created a beautiful statue, tells Davis's protagonist, "'Why should one be raised, when myriads are left?—I have not the money, boy,' . . . 'Money?' [Wolfe] said it over slowly, as one repeats the guessed answer to a riddle, doubtfully. 'That is it? Money?'" Though May says he cannot help Wolfe because he does not have money, he could help by giving him time or opportunity. May goes so far as to dismiss the thought of help altogether because he suggests that there are "myriads" in need. That is, he uses plurality as an excuse to do nothing, an idea echoed in "The Promise of the Dawn." Wolfe, the arbiter of conscience in the novel, doubts that "money" is the solution, and he is right. It is *caritas* that is needed. May uses shaky logic to ignore his conscience, and Wolfe remains unhelped.

young wife. As such, when Lot finally visits her as the last hope she has for that Christmas night, readers cannot help but hope, as Lot does, that Jinny will prove to be the one to resist naturalism's temporal, secular allure. After all, Jinny is described as "a thorough Protestant: a Christian, as far as she understood Him, with a keen interest in the Indian missions. 'Let us begin in our own country,' she said, and always prayed for the Sioux after Adam and Baby" (104). When Lot shows up on her door, though, Jinny tells her, "I daren't [help you]. What would they say of me?" (115). Like Pumphrey's, Jinny's Christian morality is dictated by her fellow humans, not by God, and she would be embarrassed to help Lot. She certainly does not desire the stigma of letting a prostitute near her baby. "Beginning in her own country," therefore, translates to helping nameless individuals whom Jinny does not know and who are clearly different from her in race and social background. It translates to sending money and others to help but never herself, to organized philanthropy rather than *caritas*. When Adam eventually finds Lot with Jinny, he is enraged: "This is no place for you or the child," he screams at her. Echoing Pumphrey, he tells her finally, "There's no help for such as you" (115). Even nominal readers of scripture would correspondingly hear the resemblance of Adam's words to Luke 2.7, where Mary and Joseph are turned away on Christmas Eve because "there was no room for them in the inn." That Jinny and Adam offer money and assistance to others beyond their community does not matter. Turning away Lot, the girl in front of them, matters. Philanthropy translates to distance, othering, and inaction and ultimately to the failure of the Christmas promise.

Throughout Christmas Eve, Lot had retained optimism for the outcome of that night, just as her uncle had at the beginning of the story: "Why, she was only a child yet, in some ways, you know; and this Christmas-time; and it was n't easy to believe, that, with the world strong and glad, and True Love coming into it, there was no chance for her" (112). Unlike her uncle, Lot is the one in need at that point, and their clashes in worldview lead to her downfall. Adam believed others would help her; she believed at least he would. Davis's readers are left in the middle, examining their own

consciences as they probably realized that the author's naturalist writing would result in Lot's demise, while wondering what they would do if placed in Adam's situation. Shortly after describing Lot's hope for "True Love" (i.e., *caritas*), Davis proceeds to share an intimate moment between Lot and her little brother, Benny, for whom Lot promises to "find Christmas" (113). Christmas, the celebration of Christ's love being born in the world, is unable to be found in a world where individuals shirk their responsibility to each other. As such, when Lot dies with her brother in her arms, sacrificing herself to "find Christmas" for Benny, she laments, "We might have been good children together, if only—I don't know whose fault this is . . . I wish—oh, I do wish somebody had been kind to me!" (118). With these pitiful words, the prostitute takes her last breath. Her death is on the hands of all those whom she has asked for help and who callously turned her away.

Read allegorically, each character's refusal to help Lot signifies that a naturalistic worldview has overrun *caritas*. At the end of her story, Davis writes, "Christmas-day had come,—the promise of the Dawn, sometime to broaden into the full and perfect day. At its close now, a still golden glow, like a great Peace, filled the earth and heaven, touching the dead Lot there, and the old man kneeling beside her" (121). Adam, a protagonist named after the first man in the Christian biblical tradition, has fallen victim to secularization. He kneels beside his niece, suddenly knowing information that he had not prior and feeling ashamed of that knowledge, much as the original Adam was ashamed after he had eaten the serpent's apple and likewise brought evil into the world. Lot, throughout Davis's narrative, is the only one who truly acts as a Christian.

The protagonist's characterization can even be conceived of as a kind of Trinity. Readers are introduced to her as "Lot," the prostitute, or "har*lot*," as she might be referred to in the King James Version of the Bible. Her Christian name (the one on her birth certificate and usually thought to be given at baptism) is Charlotte. As a daughter that is her name, and when she is spoken to in the theater, that is what she is called as if a social space could help to erase her occupation. For her brother, though, she is "Charley," and that is the name

she wants him to remember always. Adam finds Charley the next day because she quickly has told Rob, a "neighbor-boy," that she is Adam's niece. She then pleads with Rob that "when you play with Ben, I wish you'd call me Charley to him, and never—that other name" (116). This relational sense of self signals the different roles Lot/Charlotte/Charley plays in the story. As her protagonist dies, Davis emphasizes the significance of her distinctive names: "Lot's foul body lay dead there with the Night; but Jesus took the child Charley in his arms and blessed her" (11). In killing herself, Charley has committed a salvific act for her brother, not a sin, and she is resurrected on the other side. The body that was used on Earth (Lot's) is gone, and her soul (Charley's) is alive. Charlotte, it seems, was never allowed much room to prosper, as she might have had she been treated differently. Therefore, we have a protagonist who is Charlotte (the socialized daughter), Charley (the sister/mother/soul), and Lot (the harlot). These suggest daughter, mother, and spirit. She is one person with three different, co-equal identities, each of which is important to understanding her significance in the story. Interpreted in this way, Davis's protagonist signifies Christian doctrine at every turn. Davis superimposes Christian allegory on her naturalist story because she wants readers to understand that the world might be organized and understood differently on a superficial, secular level, but the truth and the promise of the Christian message does not alter with the change in times.

In "Indiscriminate Charity," Davis rhetorically asks at the editorial's conclusion, "Was the teaching of the Nazarene after all a mistake, to be amended by modern experience?" In Lot's death, it certainly feels that way, that modernity, a naturalistic, deterministic perspective in which humans look after themselves first, has prevailed. Although Benny lives, it is not because anyone sees his sister's or his own need and reaches out to assist. Rather, the little brother will forever have to live with the trauma that his sister died for him on Christmas Eve, even as she begged for kindness from person after person over and over again. The answer to Davis's query about "modern experience" is ingrained in this story; one act of love could have altered everything. Adam or any of the other characters who were

faced with Lot's need could have changed the outcome of this tragedy before it happened. Ultimately, Adam at least recognizes his fault. Davis writes that Adam "found his life work. A sworn knight in Christ's order" (121). Likewise, Davis's readers could alter other ensuing tragedies that might come before them. Her readers could become knights too, and in doing so they could disrupt the secular, naturalist paradigm Davis saw as plaguing the United States.

The responsibility is on Davis's readers to react to the changing world differently from their peers. If they were to read Davis's text incarnationally, as Sammons suggests the author wants them to, then the story should end with their "actual service to the poor" (61). Sammons further shares that "Davis's insistence on direct, embodied care for the poor adhered to a model of Christ, who renounced divine prerogatives and lived among the poor to whom he ministered" (61). Not only is Lot depicted as Christlike, but Davis also expects her readers to aim for that goal as well. The question begged becomes: How would Jesus respond to a fallen girl like Lot? In John 8.7, Jesus is asked by the Pharisees what they should do to a woman who has committed adultery (a sexual sin) against her husband. She is caught "in the very act," the Bible reads. In this well-known passage, Jesus looks down, then draws a circle in the ground around the woman, telling her accusers, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." When he asks the woman who remains to stone her as he completes the circle, she replies there is no one. He bids the woman to go and "sin no more." James 4.12 reads, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Once Lot dies, after imagining "Magdalene loved much," Davis writes, "The darkness was gone: the gray vault trembled with a coming radiance; from the East, where the Son of Man was born, a faint flush touched the earth: it was the promise of the Dawn" (119). In both cases, darkness is lifted, and the "light of life" is shown as possible only through Jesus. Although too late for Lot, forgiveness from sin and hope for the future persist. Notably, Davis published this story in January 1863 and "Indiscriminate Charity" on January 2, 1877. She uses the coming of a new year and the joy of the Christmas season to make her plea for

caritas in both texts and to defy the onslaught of a naturalist worldview that attempts to decentralize Christ's love and human connection.

"Who Cares?"

Davis's "The Promise of the Dawn" centers on an abject young woman in the most abject of circumstances. The fate of the world, Davis argues, rests not on the shoulders of the "fittest," but rather on those who would help others less fit than themselves. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI wrote an encyclical, "*Caritas* in Veritate," in which he warns of how charity is often misunderstood in contemporary times:

> I am aware of the ways in which charity has been and continues to be misconstrued and emptied of meaning, with the consequent risk of being misinterpreted, detached from ethical living and, in any event, undervalued. In the social, juridical, cultural, political and economic fields—the contexts, in other words, that are most exposed to this danger—it is easily dismissed as irrelevant for interpreting and giving direction to moral responsibility.

In 1860s America, Davis was similarly worried about how the concept of charity was evolving and could potentially become seen as detached from "moral responsibility" as Benedict XVI laments. The current definition of charity, giving to less-privileged others via an organization, was precisely what Davis predicted as the result of misconstruing and decoupling the virtue of *caritas* from divine tradition. How can one feel love for someone else if one is simply emptying a pocketbook? How can one make a human connection if one is simply offering services because one is employed to do so? Moreover, in such employment, how can it ever be known if a person is performing service out kindness or because they want to be recognized for performing said service? According to Davis, the price of the observable change in how *caritas* was being valued and understood in her time would inevitably lead to young women like Lot being ostracized as an indication of the widening gaps she perceived among diverse social groups.

Davis concludes "Indiscriminate Charity" with an allusion to the story of the Good Samaritan, wherein a Jewish man is beaten and left to die. While both a priest and a Levite pass him, neither helps him. Only the Samaritan, who is not supposed to like Jews, aids the ailing man. Davis writes, "In the attended code, shall the awful words, 'I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not; sick and ye visited me not; for, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of those my brethren, ye did it not to me,' apply only to the bureau of charity or the municipal police, and not to you and me!" Broadly, naturalism runs counter to the idea of salvation as an actual, possible outcome for the oppressed. By writing Christian texts that nod to naturalism but then undermine its ideas in their most crucial moral moments, Davis reminds readers that while the world may be increasingly stratified and filled with disciplinary and reform-oriented organizations of all kinds, individuals can still accomplish social and spiritual good through practicing religious virtue. According to Davis, acts of direct kindness can heal the individual lives of God's people in the world, not a reliance on organizations to fulfill individuals' moral work. "There was not a street in any city where a woman like [Lot] did not stand with foul hand and gnawing heart. They came from God," Davis reminds readers. "Who cares?" Lot inquires in "The Promise of the Dawn" to deafening silence.

Davis believes the answer to the question Lot poses is obvious and pressing, but she realizes the naturalist world may not care at all. Indeed, thirty years later, the deafening silence to Lot's question is not filled in Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), a book whose prostitute protagonist dies by her own hand with "joy" "distant" and "unapproachable" in the background. Joy can be found in Davis's text if readers open themselves up to its message. Perhaps it is because Davis's readers do not care enough in 1863 that results in Maggie's more famous literary demise thirty years later and likewise in a tacit recognition that naturalism by that point had nearly severed all ties with religious doctrine. Davis's version of Christian naturalism was poised to bring hope via *caritas* as a response to a rapidly secularizing world, if only her audience had listened, if only they had cared.

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William Dean Howells

Images of the Prodigal: The Moral Didactics of William Dean Howells in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*

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William Dean Howells portrays Silas Lapham as a prodigal character in order to didactically illustrate how an individual struggles with his conscience and rises above pride and selfishness, striving to become the ideal man. In this study, correlations between the New Testament's parable of the prodigal son and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885) and the possible origins and influences for including the prodigal motif in his novel will be considered. The novel's subtle allusions to the prodigal element have previously been undetected or ignored in criticism. This essay will attend to this oversight, noting how the prodigal theme not only draws upon Howells's formative religious and literary influences but also how his later encounter with Leo Tolstoy's Christian ethics is presaged in *Silas Lapham*.

Regarding the potential provenance of the prodigal theme in *Silas Lapham*, Howells records that he was familiar with the Bible, especially the Gospels of the New Testament, and one of his literary influences, William Thackeray, employed the prodigal theme through most of his fiction. In fact, the prodigal character and/or references to this biblical parable show up frequently in late nineteenth-century

literature such as Huck in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Isabel Archer in Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, Will Hannan in Hamlin Garland's *A Branch Road*, and Maggie in Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.

During his early years, Howells read the New Testament, especially the Gospels, referring to them as "the supreme human story" (*My Literary Passions* 174). His religious education also included exposure to the Christian philosopher Emmanuel Swedenborg. Howells's father, who was very fond of Swedenborg's writings, did not force these teachings upon his children, although occasionally he would read and share Swedenborg with his family (*My Literary Passions* 5). John Crowley asserts that Howells was deeply influenced by his father's adherence to the mystical doctrines of Swedenborg ("Company They Kept" 129).

In *My Literary Passions*, Howells admits that he imitated Thackeray in his writings and looked at the British author as his "master" (103). Regarding *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, biographer Kenneth E. Eble observes: "One cannot but think of Howells's great fondness for Thackeray in this social and satirical novel" (95). Perhaps some of the seeds of this novel's prodigal motif are borrowed from Thackeray, who "was a prodigal himself, and intrigued by prodigals: the Prodigal Son is, in one guise or another, an almost permanent inhabitant of his fiction" (Carey 9).

With the imagery of the prodigal in front of the reader, one may discern that Silas Lapham's challenge is to rise above selfishness by debasing or lowering himself in humility. According to Donald Pizer, "the theme of the novel anticipates Howells's acceptance of Tolstoy's ethical ideals within the next few years and helps explain his response to those ideals once he encountered them" (69). Although he had not yet studied Tolstoy when he produced *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, it is helpful to briefly consider why Howells embraced the Russian's writings and how three questions raised in the novel seem to find their answers in Tolstoy: What does it mean to be a gentleman? How should the ideal man act? What is the highest good?

What is a true gentleman? In the novel Lapham lacks the manners and social skills to be accepted by the society of people such as

Bromfield Corey and family. After reading Tolstoy, Howells states that such a concern is rendered as frivolous:

> [Tolstoy] leads you back to the only true ideal, away from that false standard of the gentleman, to the Man who sought not to be distinguished from other men, but identified with them, to that Presence in which the finest gentleman shows his alloy of vanity, and the greatest genius shrinks to the measure of his miserable egotism. I learned from Tolstoy to try character and motive by no other test, and though I am perpetually false to that sublime ideal myself, still the ideal remains with me, to make me ashamed that I am not true to it. (*My Literary Passions* 183)

How should the ideal man act? Howells places difficult moral choices before Lapham. In fact, the importance of how the supposed self-made man rises above the social pressures of material success is at the very core of the novel. Howells would later declare that his fondness and "intimacy" for Tolstoy was "not because I know him, but because I know myself through him" (*Sebastopol* 5). Tolstoy "awakens in his reader the will to be a man . . . simply, really" (*My Literary Passions* 183). Furthermore, Howells admires Tolstoy's emphasis on moral enlightenment, declaring that with Tolstoy "you feel instantly that the man is mighty, and mighty through his conscience; that he is not trying to surprise you or dazzle you with his art, but that he is trying to make you think clearly and feel rightly about vital things" (*Sebastopol* 8).

What is the highest good? Should one seek his own pleasure as the ultimate objective of existence? Offering some of the basic principles such as the Golden Rule, Tolstoy taught Howells "to see life not as a chase of a forever impossible personal happiness, but as a field for endeavor towards the happiness of the whole human family; and I can never lose this vision, however I close my eyes, and strive to see my own interest as the highest good" (*My Literary Passions* 184). From Tolstoy, Howells became convinced that through unselfish acts and striving for humility and goodness that the good will always prevail (*Sebastopol* 9). Silas Lapham shows Howells's concern

regarding selfishness and the impact of individual choices on society.

After embracing much of Tolstoy's social philosophy and worldview, Howells's writings incorporate similar issues and didactics. For example, the Tolstoyan notion "that man's primary commitment is to mankind" exists as a common theme in *Annie Kilburn* (1888) and *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) and is present but "less obvious" in *Silas Lapham* (Pizer 69). According to Edwin H. Cady, in *Annie Kilburn* we find the most Tolstoyan character represented in Mr. Peck (86–88). Tolstoy's influence on Howells's writing has been previously examined and documented.[1] Having considered several influences on Howells's Christian philosophy, we will now turn our focus towards examining the text of *Silas Lapham* and analyzing how the title character can be viewed as a Prodigal Son figure. Furthermore, our study will consider the moral didactics that Howells uses as the prodigal transforms into a new man by exercising his agency.

In *Silas Lapham* there are two direct references to the parable of the prodigal son. The first appears during journalist Bartley Hubbard's interview with Lapham. After telling how he left home and traveled to Texas, Lapham declares that he discovered (in just three months) how Vermont "was good enough" for him. To this Hubbard asks: "Fatted calf business?" (11). Scant detail is given about his homecoming: "I presume they were glad to see me"; Lapham's parents die shortly after his return. The second reference comes when Tom Corey returns home after spending a winter in Texas. Both he and his father use the term *prodigal* to describe young Corey's return to Boston. Because of his experiences away from the Corey household, Tom Corey has insights and ideas that differ from those of his parents. Although it is unclear what prodigal-like experiences both Lapham and Tom had during their respective visits to Texas, like Lapham, young Corey enjoyed the material pleasures of the world. For example, on his way back home Tom stopped in New York City for a clothes-shopping spree. Upon his return to Boston, while conversing with his father, the prodigal Tom confessed, "I've wasted

[1]See Walsh and Alexander.

time and money enough. . . . I am ashamed to come back and live upon you, sir" (63).

By definition, the word prodigal denotes careless extravagance and wasteful expenditure. The nineteenth century has been identified as the "Great Prodigal" Century because of the perceived "opportunities for material and social progress" which were "squandered in various forms of riotous living," "exuberance, recklessness, ostentation, and waste" (Fairchild vii–viii, 82). Indeed, Howells also saw both the responsibilities and hazards of material wealth and prosperity in his era. The failures that he both witnessed and experienced eventually crushed "his faith in American society and its institutions" (*Dean of American Letters* 17). In a letter written to Henry James in 1888, Howells illustrates his skepticism about trusting in the moral progress and certainty of civilization:

> I should hardly like to trust pen and ink with all the audacity of my social ideas; but after fifty years of optimistic content with 'civilization' and its ability to come out all right in the end, unless it bases itself anew on a real equality. Meantime, I wear a fur-lined overcoat, and live in all the luxury my money can buy. (*Life in Letters* 1:417)

Moreover, this excerpt shows the personal ambivalence regarding social responsibility and the need for equality and appears to be something that Howells had been battling in his mind because some of these concerns surface three years earlier in *Silas Lapham*.

The novel features many discussions on the sources of civilization, primarily from Bromfield Corey, with much of the emphasis on literature. As Mr. Corey observes, whereas previously religion was the means of polishing and civilizing man, secular reading now provides such an education (110). The types of books being read, especially those like *Tears, Idle Tears*, are considered and scrutinized during conversations; Howells scorns the popular novels of the day as unreliable teachers for the masses (182–83, 223). Although the Laphams plan to build an impressive library in their new house and stock it with book titles suggested by Tom Corey, we may assume

that Mr. Lapham's education, however, will continue to consist of perusing newspapers and attending the theater.

But such discussions on civilization, coupled with the Laphams' goal of being accepted into the society of Boston's cultured elite are not meant to distort Howells's inexorable thesis. "It's a curious thing, this thing we call civilization," declares Bromfield Corey. "We think it is an affair of epochs and nations. It's really an affair of individuals" (*Silas Lapham* 109). This concern with the individual marks Howells's quest in the novel: to show how personal choices impact civilization.

Likewise, the biblical narrative of the prodigal son focuses on the importance of the individual. The story appears in Luke 15, a chapter devoted to emphasizing the value that God places on finding the lost soul. Preceding the prodigal tale, Jesus presents two parables, the lost sheep and the lost coin, which show the virtue of seeking for that which is missing. While these deal with things of value (an animal and money), the parable of the prodigal son addresses the infinite worth of the soul.

As Crowley notes, Howells was "familiar . . . with the idea of the 'soul' as the irreducible core of human identity" (129). Furthermore, Howells believed that "we are creatures of our own making" (Crowley 129). In his writings he resists determinism and preaches the power of free agency. For example, Howells was troubled over Spencerian evolutionary theory primarily because of the consequential "ethical effects of [its] determinism and its disparagement of human intellectual process" (Alkana 93). In an 1874 review in *The Atlantic*, Howells expressed his concern: "We suppose that nowadays Evolution is to console and support us—not with the hope of heavenly peace somewhere, but the elevating consciousness of primordial jelly" (Alkana 93). At the heart of this philosophical dilemma was Howells's insistence on the essentialness of free will.[2] "The individual's ability to

[2]Although acknowledged as a novelist in the tradition of realism, Howells includes the language of Social Darwinism in this novel, typically articulated through Bromfield Corey: "young animals" (109); "evolve" (178); "species" (188); "animal strength" (322).

transcend external circumstance and exercise free will recurs thematically in Howells's later fiction," including *Silas Lapham* (Alkana 93).

Similarly, the issue of free agency appears in the New Testament parable. The prodigal son chooses to take his inheritance, leave home, and explore his freedom in the world. Through his experiences he realizes that his erroneous ways and undisciplined decisions have not brought him the happiness he expected. Pleasure is gone; he hungers and must work. The prodigal is a product of his personal choices. Although not explicit in this parable, the reader of the Bible can surmise that the prodigal's awareness of his miserable condition is not caused by chance. His choices led him away but what source awakens his conscience? Was that awakening providentially inspired? Or does the prodigal son recognize the cause-correlation between his behavior and its result? In *Silas Lapham* both the protagonist and reader are confronted with the abstruse problem of whether life's opportunities are created by Providence or by chance. Perhaps Howells wants to expand the dilemma into a trilemma: Providence, chance, or self-made. Mrs. Persis Lapham offers her husband the perspective of possible providential intervention in their affairs. When the Civil War breaks out and interrupts their fledgling entrepreneurial venture, Mrs. Lapham surmises that is could be "a providence" (17). After years of nagging at her husband for his unethical treatment of Rogers, when Lapham reveals how his act of restitution has placed him in a precarious position, Mrs. Lapham tearfully declares her own moral confusion: "It does seem too hard . . . that you have to give up this chance when Providence had fairly raised it up for you." Colonel Lapham responds, "I guess it wan't Providence raised it up" (258).

The mysterious trilemma is further complicated in considering the events of how the new house on the Back Bay was destroyed. The other chimneys had been tested with no incident or trouble; Lapham was "seized" by a "whim" to build a fire in the music room fireplace (287). After building it he thoughtfully admires his handiwork: "Nothing could have been better; the chimney was a perfect success" (287). Then he resolves not to sell the house (the proceeds of which may have been enough to save him financially) and stubbornly adds that "whoever the [buyer] was, who had offered to buy his house

might go to the devil; he would never sell it as long as he had a dollar" (287). When the house burns to the ground, the cause of the fire is assumed to be Lapham's sole responsibility. Was it because of his impulsive act? Was he solely to blame? Or is it possible that the police officer who was given a cigar by Lapham could have smoked it outside and inadvertently caused the blaze? Was the fire caused by the choices and actions of Lapham? Or was it by chance that he just happened to try the only faulty chimney in the house? Perhaps Providence intervened so that Lapham could rise after falling? When Lapham discovers that his fire insurance policy has lapsed, Mrs. Lapham claims the "merciful" hand of Providence had intervened; if it had not expired Silas could have been accused of arson (289).

The sin of the prodigal son is that he wasted his wealth in undisciplined extravagance. Similarly, in the novel Howells presents Lapham as a character with material wealth and prosperity. Although the family has lived comfortably in an older section of Boston, Lapham sets his sights on building the larger house on the New Land on the shores of the trendier Back Bay. Mrs. Lapham introduced the idea, observing that they lived in the "wrong neighborhood" to be accepted into the society of Boston's cultural elite (30). Mr. and Mrs. Lapham believe that in order to have their daughters marry properly they need to be introduced into this society and building the house on the Back Bay represents this endeavor. However, the venture also typifies the prodigality that Howells utilizes didactically in the novel. The extravagant project costs more than expected; the architect alters their designs to match the latest styles which do not really appeal to the Laphams but, because the styles are *en vogue*, they relent. The house is not practical but extravagantly enormous with fireplaces in every room. Even their daughters think that their old home is more suitable, commenting how it is "convenient to the horse cars" (31). Perhaps the new home's library could be viewed as wasteful because Mr. Lapham does not read books (in fact the only true reader is the daughter, Penelope) and that the family has always borrowed books from the public library.

Lapham's desire to enter into civilized society leads him, his wife, and daughter, Irene, to the Coreys' dinner party. Although heretofore a teetotaler by "principle" (177), Lapham choose to drink the wine

served to him. In fact, he gives way to uninhibited gluttony: "he took everything and ate everything" (177). His lack of self-restraint leads to disaster, for by the end of the party the intoxicated Lapham talks "unceasingly," telling stories and bragging in his usual way. His senses are dulled, and he thinks all is well, having "a great time" and calling it "a triumph" (191).

The summation of prodigality comes after the Back Bay house burns to the ground. First, there is Lapham's stubborn and prideful resolution not to sell the house even though it could save him financially. Secondly, the revelation that the fire insurance policy has lapsed shows how neglectful Lapham was in his stewardship of material resources. Finally, because the objective of building the new house was to assist their daughters' social opportunities for marriage, the project is rendered as wasteful; Penelope marries the groom of their choice (Tom Corey), rendering the Back Bay mansion, now in ashes, superfluous.

In the parable of the prodigal, the wayward son's demise comes as a result of careless behavior; he must humbly admit that he has failed, return to his father for help, and become a servant. This moral lesson of the necessity for humility is taught in both the parable and in Howells's novel. During a conversation between Silas and Persis, Lapham's wife reveals his weakness. Lapham has become so accustomed to seeing his self-identity in his material possessions and position of power as a successful businessman that he fails to see the spiritual consequences in his life. With her Christian training, Mrs. Lapham strives to serve as her husband's (albeit unreliable) conscience. Furthermore, she worries about his spiritual weakness, perceiving his flawed relationship with former business partner, Rogers, as a danger to his soul, and wishes for him to make amends.

Yet inasmuch as the Laphams desire to get in with the society of the Coreys and other prominent Bostonians, Persis also senses that her husband's lack of self-awareness could undermine these efforts. His relationship of competition and pride with Bromfield Corey and Rogers is a concern for Persis. When she states, "I'd sooner die than have you humble yourself to a living soul," Mrs. Lapham has declared precisely what Silas needs to do (112). Later in the narrative, Lapham

tells his wife about his meeting with Bromfield Corey; but the Colonel tries to conceal something:

> He was not letting his wife see in his averted face the struggle that revealed itself there—the struggle of stalwart achievement not to be sneakingly glad of its amiability, but to stand up and look at it with eyes on the same level. God, who made us so much like himself, but out of the dust, alone knows then that struggle will end. (134–35)

So, what is his struggle? The paragraph ends with the answer: "pride" (135).

Humility is the antithesis of pride or self-conceit. Regarding this subject, C. S. Lewis asserts: "It is the comparison that makes [one] proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride has gone" (95). Howells uses the novel to show readers how Lapham rises above pride by self-abasement. Therefore, Howells seems to be illustrating in the life of Lapham the following principle taught by Jesus in the New Testament: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23.12).

What the American author achieves in the character of Silas Lapham is in some degree a foreshadowing of what Howells would later praise Tolstoy for accomplishing. Howells in his 1887 introduction to *Sebastopol* writes that Tolstoy teaches "that the Right is the sum of each man's poor little personal effort to do right, and that the success of this effort means daily, hourly self-renunciation, self-abasement, the sinking of one's pride in absolute squalor before duty" (9). Howells perceives that the greatness of Tolstoy's moral didactics is found "in his conception of Karenin at that crucial moment when the cruelly outraged man sees that he cannot be good with dignity" (*Sebastopol* 10). Similarly, Howells portrays Silas Lapham as a character whose goodness depends on humility, unselfishness, and moral responsibility.

In the novel's opening chapter, Howells introduces the question of moral responsibility during Hubbard's interview with Lapham.

The reference is to Lapham's paint and the human conscience, but it is passed over lightly because the reporter and reader are focused on the millionaire's rise to fortune (14). Overall, the interview emphasizes the self-made man's opportunities afforded by luck and chance. Lapham acknowledges that he believes in his paint, that "it's a blessing to the world," and that he mixes his paint "with Faith" (19).

In contrast to the prodigal son, who in the parable during his sorrowful venturing has no external guide or companion, Persis Lapham appoints herself as her husband's surrogate moral guardian. James M. Cox comments that there is much talk of conscience in the book, "and a very bad conscience it is. Mrs. Lapham is the primary agent assigned to keep her finger . . . on the tender spot" (119). Mrs. Lapham admits how she prided herself as "superior to her husband [in her] instant and steadfast perception of right and wrong, and the ability to choose the right to her own hurt" (*Rise of Silas Lapham* 308). Although Persis is supposedly there to help make the difficult moral decisions, ultimately Colonel Lapham is left alone to choose. Evidently relenting to a guilty conscience, he decides to assist his former partner, Rogers, by investing money in risky business schemes (239–41). However, Mrs. Lapham still blames Silas for squeezing Rogers out of their paint business. Since Rogers is now suffering financially, she says: "Well, I want you should ask yourself whether Rogers would ever have gone wrong, or got into these ways of his, if it hadn't been for your forcing him out of the business when you did. I want you should think whether you're not responsible for everything he'd done since" (241). Lapham responds by declaring his moral independence with some ambivalence: "I guess I can take of myself" (241).

His problems with Rogers continue, and Lapham's practice of buying and selling stocks on margin bring major financial losses. Then suddenly the paint business begins to suffer as the competition improves its market share. As Lapham finds his resources depleted and the obstacles appear practically insurmountable, one option remains—unload a property that he acquired through Rogers to a group of Englishmen. The moral dilemma is that Lapham knows

that the property will soon be negligible. Although his financial salvation depends upon the proceeds of such a sale, Lapham "perceived his moral responsibility" (297). Still he struggles with the choice set before him and is left alone to figure out what to do. His wife is no help to him now "in the crucial moment, when he had the utmost need of her insight. He had counted upon her just spirit to stay his own in its struggle to be just" (303). According to the text, the reason for Mrs. Lapham's silence is ambiguous—perhaps "she was daunted and confused in her own conscience" (303). Upon her husband's command, she reluctantly withdraws from Silas, leaving "him [alone] with his tempter [Rogers]" (304). Lapham refuses that night to relent in selling the property to Rogers. However, he promises Rogers that he will announce his decision the next morning. After Rogers' departure, Persis offers to talk with her husband but he prefers to be left alone. Throughout that sleepless night, Persis

> lay awake and listened to [Silas] walking up and down. But when the first light whitened the window, the words of the Scripture came into her mind: "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. . . . And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (305)

According to Cox's reading, there is a troubling "relation between money and morals in this whole plot line. It amounts to Howells's setting out to subtract Lapham's money from him in order to supply credit to his moral bank account, and it has a manufactured case about it" (119). The problematic relationship between money and morality, though an ancient one, still proves enigmatic to the modern reader. Likewise, money and morality provide a challenge to the prodigal son in Jesus's parable. As Cox summarizes, "Lapham redeemed is Lapham broken as well as broke" (12). Like the prodigal son, "[h]e returns with his vernacular, to the Vermont homestead whence he came and, presumably where he belongs" (Cox 120).

Whereas Cox sees Lapham caught in a predestined corner, unable to escape, Eble discerns that Howells "carefully create[d] a

number of conditions and rationalizations that might have let Lapham compromise with his conscience" (96). The latter seems to be a more accurate reading because, for instance, Lapham is allowed to determine on his own to deal with offers from the Englishmen and Rogers: "In the end, Silas must make a moral choice based on his own sense of right and wrong and policed by a not always active conscience" (Eble 97).

The novel ends as it began—with an interview, but rather than a journalist probing we have a minister, the Reverend Mr. Sewell, who is interested in examining Lapham as a "moral spectacle" (335). Together they reflect upon the course of events in Lapham's life, studying what Silas supposedly has already carefully analyzed—the pivotal cause of his financial demise. "Sometimes," Lapham states, "I get to thinking it all over, and it seems to me I done wrong about Rogers in the first place; that the whole trouble came from that. It was just like starting a row of bricks" (336). This confession is obscured by the minister's reply; apparently Sewell was hearing but not listening: "[A]s I understand, you don't admit—you don't feel sure—that you ever actually did wrong this man" (336). After recalling the decision that represents the summit of his moral rise, "that [he] couldn't sell out to those Englishmen" without telling them the truth "just how things stood," Sewell asks the Colonel, "[D]o you have any regrets?" Lapham's answer seems to ignore the preceding dialogue and takes us back to the beginning. Rather than deplore acting upon his conscience, Lapham's reply seems an ambiguous consideration of the opportunities of his life. His statements in the novel's concluding paragraph are complicated by phrases like "it don't always seems as if I done it," "I don't know" (repeated twice), and "I guess I should have to do it" (336–37). There are various ways a reader can interpret Lapham's contemplative remarks, but the options return to the aforementioned trilemma regarding the sources of life's opportunities: Providence, chance, or self-made.

Likewise, the closing scene invites readers to ponder along with Lapham on the character's cyclical life: rising (financially with his successful paint business), falling (morally by forcing his partner out of his paint business), falling (financially), and rising (morally by

providing financial resources to Rogers and by not taking advantage of the Englishmen). One obstacle that the prodigal Lapham must overcome during his moral rise is selfishness. In this way, *Silas Lapham* mirrors Thackeray's concern with selfishness in *Vanity Fair*, where Thackeray "is out to track it through its sinuous ways, to show it coiled within the most harmless-looking motives" (Carey 195). Concerning his early business relationship with Rogers, Lapham "could not see that he was acting solely in his own interest" (47). As Mrs. Lapham consistently reminded Silas how he had wrongly removed Rogers from his thriving paint venture, "the question stung and burned anew" (47). Howells as narrator then declares the novel's primary didactic message: "Happy is the man forever after who choose the ideal, the unselfish part, in such an exigency! Lapham could not rise to it" (47).

Paradoxically, in order to rise morally in the end, he must also choose to suffer pain by sacrificing his greatest pride: his paint business. According to Pizer, "Within the subplot this principle requires Lapham to choose on the basis of an 'economy of pain' formula in which the fewest suffer. Within the main plot it requires him to weigh his own and Rogers's personal needs against the greater need of all men for decency and honesty" (67). For many readers the "economy of pain" principle appears to be directed toward the subplot that includes the characters in the love triangle (Tom Corey, Penelope, and Irene Lapham). However, Pizer suggests that this principle also applies to Silas Lapham's moral dilemma with Rogers and the Englishmen:

> The subplot thus contributes to the "education" of Lapham in the correct solution of moral problems. His moral rise is the product of more than a conscience troubled by the earlier treatment of Rogers. It is also a result of his ready absorption of the 'economy of pain' formula as a moral guide in the subplot, a formula which he later translates into its exact corollary, the greatest happiness for the greatest number, when he is faced in the main plot with the more difficult problem of the ethical relationship of the individual to society. (Pizer 67)

The final question to examine in this study: Does Silas Lapham experience a transformation, becoming a new man? At the end of the novel there are changes in the once confident, cocky, man-of-the-world character. After suffering a financial collapse, the prodigal returns to his origins in Vermont. Lapham is "broken" and "weakened" and "that bragging note of his rarely sounded" (326). In these "changed conditions" (335), he works "faithfully" (326) and "humbly" (334), admitting "that he had made mistakes" and "had been no man's enemy but his own" (333). His appearance has changed—now "rather shabby and slovenly in dress" (335). Although their country house is plain, "[t]here were certainly all the necessaries, but no luxuries, unless the statutes of Prayer and Faith might be so considered" (335).

Lapham has not died, but he has been resurrected into a character with greater humility. Here the correlation again with the prodigal son parable: "this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32). Like a corpse, the character of Lapham was metaphorically buried. As Silas explains, "Seems like as if it was a hole opened up for me, and I crept out of it" (336–37). In rising out of that symbolic grave, Lapham represents a new man. Describing Lapham's return to Vermont, the narrator states, "[T]his was as much the end of his proud, prosperous life as death itself could have been. He was returning to begin life anew" (325). Through his trials and pains Lapham recovers a part of himself previously lost: "Adversity had so far been his friend that it had taken from him all hope of the social success for which people crawl and truckle, and restored him, through failure and doubt and heartache, the manhood which his prosperity had so nearly stolen from him" (330–31).

Early in the narrative through the voice of Persis, Howells presents the moral framework for how he intends to transform the soul of Silas Lapham: "[I]t isn't what you've got, and it isn't what you've done, exactly. It's what you are" (111). Until his moral crisis, Lapham has material wealth and success, and he is proud of his achievements in the business arena, but his pride and selfishness are among his character flaws. Waste, pride, selfishness, the struggle with conscience—all

these provide challenges for the prodigal character to encounter. Experiences in dealing with both prosperity and adversity accumulate to form and mold Lapham's moral education. Although Lapham is not broken in the sense that he has not completely lost hope, he has been sufficiently humbled in such a manner that it allows the transformation to occur. From a Judeo-Christian perspective, this humility is necessary for salvation: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and save such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34.18). By choosing the ideal or "unselfish part" and consequently atoning and suffering under the "economy of pain" principle, the reformed prodigal Silas Lapham transcends spiritually above his prior self.

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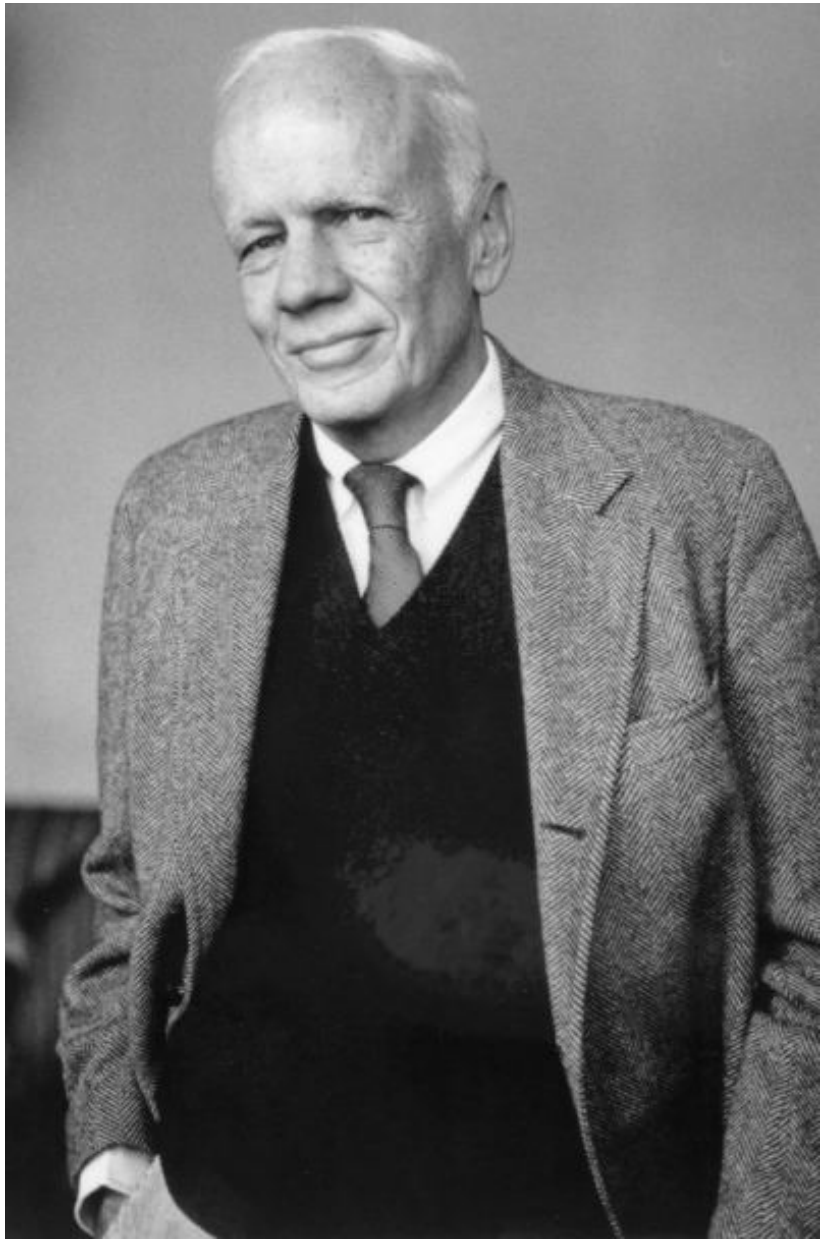

Walker Percy

Walker Percy and Friends, the Church, and His Hero-Saint, Thomas More

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When Walker Percy wrote to Caroline Gordon in April of 1952 about his admiration for St. Thomas More, he had been in the Catholic Church for about five years (Tolson 204). In time, More became for Percy not only a personal spiritual guide but an historical, religious figure who plays a key role in two of Percy's novels—*Love in the Ruins* (1971) and *The Thanatos Syndrome* (1987)[1]—as the namesake and "collateral ancestor" of one of the novelist's protagonists, Dr. Tom More (*LR* 22). Percy's preoccupation with More remained throughout his life and career, as is evident—in addition to the two novels—in a review he wrote of a 1984 biography of the saint, in correspondence, articles, and in interviews.[2]

[1]Hereafter abbreviated to *Love* and *Thanatos* in text and *LR* and *TS* in parenthetical reference.

[2]Another connection between Percy and More is a shared interest in language and signs, an occasional topic of More's humanist writings. Percy's intense interest in semiotics, however, is beyond the immediate scope of this essay. See Thomas D'Evelyn, "Percy's Christian Humanist, More Hero Than Saint" (69–70).

Percy regarded More, the saint and humanist, above all as a spiritual and literary role model for his own vocation as both pilgrim and writer. (He also professes to see More early on as an agent for the conversion of the South, a notion that strikes this writer merely as hyperbole issuing from the enthusiasm of a young convert.) St. Thomas for Percy in particular was, beyond that, a complex, multifaceted figure who was as much a model and influence in his own way as Gabriel Marcel and Søren Kierkegaard were in theirs. While Thomas More is role model to Dr. Tom More, he is also foil, for Tom, especially in *Love*, would be like him but consistently falls far short (Hobson 8). In addition, both *Love* and *Thanatos* in varying degrees address the utopian concept made particularly prominent by More's most famous work, *Utopia* (1516). Percy's earlier novel is a wild, satiric narrative about an American utopia whose "center did not hold" (*LR* 18), in short, a dystopia.

The secondary literature on the two novels is extensive and wide-ranging with commentary on the influence of More's *Utopia* and the writings of Fyodor Dostoevsky, C. S. Pierce, and Flannery O'Connor. Critics also note themes derived from gnostic and stoic thought, the longing for community, and—in its absence—suicide.[3]

I.

Percy's early fascination with More was certainly a matter of seeing in him a kindred spirit. In treating the overall relationship between the two figures, we first of all take a close look at a striking letter Percy wrote about More a few years after his entry into the Catholic Church (in December of 1947), which document alone will require a fair amount of unbundling. Additionally, various other sources—letters, reviews, articles, interviews, and other works by Percy and others—will illuminate his appreciation of More.

[3]The influence of *Utopia* is treated in an insightful master's thesis (McCarthy, Introduction, 4–12). Other commentaries will be cited subsequently in the text.

In the letter Percy wrote Caroline Gordon in April of 1952, some background is in order. As a relatively recent Catholic convert herself—along with her then husband Allen Tate—she had written Percy in her role as an accomplished novelist and now mentor (Samway 144).[4] So struck was she with Percy's letter that she typed a portion of it to send to Andrew Lytle. I quote in part:

> I agree with you about St. Thomas More. He is, for us, the Road Back for our countrymen, I mean, for southerners. For More is the spiritual ancestor of [Robert E.] Lee. He is the man to pray to for the conversion of the South. One of the stumbling blocks to the Southerner (or the American) who is drawn to the Church is that he sees, not the Church of More, not the English Church which is his spiritual home, but the Churc[h] of St. Alphonsus Liguori by way of the Irish Jesuits. If he does go in, he must go in with his face averted and his nose held against this odor of Italian-Irish pietism and all the bad statues and architecture. Of course this is somewhat exaggerated and prideful, because it is a salutary lesson in obedience and humility to take St. Alphonsus (Hell, he was a great saint!) But if Allen is forming a St. Thomas More Society I want in. (Percy to Gordon, April 4, 1952)[5]

In one respect, Percy suggests that for the Southerner (as well as certain other Americans), More represents an English Church that would be more palatable for those of discriminating tastes—like Percy—particularly those whose sensibilities are formed by English-language spirituality and culture rather than by Irish-Italian religiosity, seemingly an ethnic, sociological barrier for Percy and his

[4]Gordon's formal entry into the Church was in November of 1947.

[5]This letter is also quoted in full in *Good Things* (46–48). Apparently attuned to the tastes of upper-class folks on both side of the Mason Dixon line, she also sent a copy of it to Robert Lowell of New England Brahmin stock, who would in time find himself in the Catholic Church, if only for a time (Wyatt-Brown 433).

Southern Catholic friends. Percy's point may appear rather superficial and snobbish. Yet "culture" as he understands it here is, nevertheless, a powerful factor in how one can be called into communion with the Catholic Church, even if in the last analysis such communion should not be defined by English, Italian, Irish, German, Polish or any other particular ethnicity.

We should also take into account what Allen Tate (Gordon's then husband) had written to Percy in January of that same year (1952) relative to Andrew Lytle and the Church:

> When Andrew Lytle says he can't join the Catholic Church because it isn't in the Southern tradition, what he ought to mean is that the South has no tradition without the Church; for *the thing that we all still cherish in the South was originally and fundamentally Catholic Christianity.* (Tate 89, my emphasis)

Germane to Tate's assertion, Flannery O'Connor, in a letter explaining why as a Catholic she wrote about Christian fundamentalists, described her character Tarwater (from *The Violent Bear It Away*) as a "crypto-Catholic" (1183).[6] Leaving aside both the strangeness of O'Connor's fictional character and Tate's reformulating Lytle's theological position for him, it should be clear that Tate, and perhaps Gordon and Percy, too, see in Southern religious orthodoxy Catholicism in a vestigial form. To paraphrase O'Connor, we might call it "crypto-Catholicism." And if one objects to that manner of putting it or the claim itself, I expect that Tate, Gordon, and O'Connor might ask, where else would religious orthodoxy, albeit in a Protestant expression, ultimately come from except the ancient ecclesia,

[6]Relatedly, in "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South," O'Connor alludes to a newspaper story of a preacher in Tennessee who "sacrificed a live lamb chained to a cross" at a revival service. It may have been just an indulgence in spectacle, she notes, but suspects the preacher of unwittingly getting very close to the Catholic Mass (O'Connor 859–60). One need only recall the words of the priest at the elevation of the Host—"Behold the Lamb of God / Behold him who takes away the sins of the world"—to appreciate her point.

whether one locates that orthodoxy in the second century, the fourth, the eighth, or in some other period?

This sort of essential orthodoxy, I think, is precisely what Richard Weaver, a keen student of the Fugitive-Agrarians, is adumbrating in the "Older Religiousness of the South." Without making a claim for Thomas Aquinas being known and read in the Old South—far from it—Weaver asserts that a Thomistic dualism was at play in "Southern religious orthodoxy." That is, what may be learned through observation and reason must be supplemented by what is given through revelation by God. In the case of Christian fundamentalism, and American Protestantism in general, the locus of this revelation is the Bible, sans ecclesial hierarchy. For Catholicism, it is both Scripture and the Church—including Tradition—as the interpreter of that written revelation (*Southern Essays* 142). Because this revealed orthodoxy appears in different guises, it may be hard for some to recognize.

In the Percy-to-Gordon letter, the English Thomas More is also for Percy "the spiritual ancestor of Lee," another rather striking, bold assertion. Nevertheless, it indirectly casts a light on what Percy says about More. Percy notes elsewhere, in a discussion of the South and its partial failure "to develop a full-fledged culture," that its heroes were mostly political and military and "its patron saint a general, Robert E. Lee." (*Signposts* 182).[7] At first blush it may seem inappropriate to link More and Lee as the younger Percy does: More the Catholic, lawyer, humanist, saint of the Reformation period, Lee the Confederate general, low-church Episcopalian, and later college president. But if we get beyond the obvious differences, we may see a key affinity in their self-sacrificing lives and actions, from a Southern cultural perspective: More is the martyr "who would die

[7]Percy, who as a college student read Freeman's four-volume biography of Lee (Elie 78) is not, of course, alone in noting Lee's special status for the Southerner and even for the nation at large. As Thomas Connelly in *Marble Man* observes, "[Lee] became a God figure for Virginians, a saint for the white Protestant South, and a hero for the nation" whose "code would be compared to that of Christ" (Connelly 3).

for his principles" (as Percy writes) in his conflict with the throne ("Review" 2). And Lee, devoting himself at great personal cost to Virginia and the South's defense, became for many "the rationale of the Lost Cause, the proof of the argument that the righteous do not always prevail" (Connelly 3). Lee, became, in short for many in Percy's context a kind of Christian martyr, even a Christ-figure. Thus, while Lee follows More in time and circumstance, he might serve as a beacon, spiritually speaking, for those few Protestant Southerners who might be drawn to the Catholic Church.[8] Whatever we may make of both Lee's and More's respective motives—both of which were, historically speaking, lost causes—we may be a little closer here to Percy's surprising comparison of the two in the letter to Gordon.[9]

The editor of a recent collection of Flannery O'Connor's letters observes that for some of Southerners—such as Tate, Gordon, and Lytle—More's stand against the throne was relevant in political terms, that is, as applied to the South's stand against the North in

[8]O'Connor's friend and fellow novelist Marion Montgomery observed, in a letter to me, of Edward Blalock (in his *Wandering of Desire*): "Cut off from Lee, he is also cut off from T. More, as Percy might say" (Montgomery, Letter 1). In brief, then, if More is a Way Back to the Church, Lee is a way back to More. While not strictly relevant to this point, it is interesting to note that Percy wrote a review of the Montgomery novel, along with two others in 1962 (*Conversations* 68).

[9]The current status of such Confederate figures as Lee has certainly shifted in both the popular mind and among professional historians since even the late twentieth century. My primary interest here is not in promoting one particular view of Robert E. Lee over another—as Lost Cause saint, Christ figure, or evil, slave-holding traitor—but rather to consider him in the context of Percy and his views, which don't tend to veer to political or religious extremes. While in a brief essay on the Civil War Centennial he expresses admiration for Lee, he notes that the flag Lee defended has become a symbol of racism, suitable for use in making "panties and pillowcases" (*Signposts* 80). The same sort of change is true for St. More as regards shifting attitudes over the centuries. While the argument could be made—and was made by his own favorite daughter—that More's final stand was self-destructive and foolish, from his own perspective he was a martyr for conscience and the Church against the usurping power of the throne.

1861–65 and after the war as well, as they suffered both the shame of military defeat and Reconstruction itself (Alexander 46). Even Lytle, who had no attraction to the Church, saw in More a great English, Christian statesman willing to stand against a Machiavellian tyrant and the centralized, ruthless power-state he was creating, which upset the balance between "lords temporal and lords spiritual" (Lytle 214).[10] For Lytle and the rest, the North may be said to have represented for the South just such a political power both before the War and even more so after. Where Percy deviates, however, is just here; despite the early comparison of Lee and More, his attachment to the latter is clearly less political than personal and spiritual. Percy was in fact more wary than some of his friends of the South's tendency to make a religion of its history in the Lost Cause movement, and saw in it, I believe, an entrapment that would lead him astray from more central concerns, both personal and literary, as *homo viator* ("man as pilgrim").[11]

What Percy sees in More is also, to be sure, much more than his cultural "Englishness" over against the allegedly unattractive Italian-Irish spirituality as represented by saints like St. Alphonsus Liguori. Beyond culture, beyond politics, the true significance of More for Percy lies, I contend, in his sacrificial witness in both his life and death. We find support for this point in Percy's own comments on the saint in his review of the biography of More by Richard Marius,

[10]During the time that Gordon and Tate were in transit to the Church, Lytle wrote Tate, 6 May 1948: "What is this rumor of Popery I hear?" ("To Tate" 214).

[11]On the tendency to divinize the Southern cause, see Richard Weaver's "The South and the American Union" (*Southern Essays* 250–51). Percy, in accounting for his conversion in "Why Are You a Catholic?," acknowledges the complexity of that experience: "Roman, Arthurian, Semitic, and semiotic . . . and even Alabamian" (250). He notes as well that the beau idéal of the South would not be "the crucified Christ but rather the stoic knight at parade rest," as embodied in the figure of Robert E. Lee (*Signposts* 313). Even so, his fundamental commitment is to the Church, even while acknowledging that he, like Tennyson's Ulysses, "is a part of all that [he] has met" (250).

as well as in correspondence, interviews, and certain details of his family's history. While his focus on More in the Marius review is primarily on the saint's value as role model, one sentence in particular highlights More's overarching importance as sacrificial witness. Percy writes: "There is no doubt about the courage . . . and *vast attractiveness of his martyrdom*" (Percy, *Thomas More* 3, emphasis added).[12] More than his "Englishness" or statesmanship, this appears to be what Percy and others find most distinctive and compelling in More. His martyrdom is "vast," I take it, on both a micro- and macro-level. That is, it is significant in itself given More's renowned status, person, and character, and "vast," moreover, reach and potential influence on others, some of whom would potentially be drawn to the Church that produced him and to which he gave witness.[13] (Even at the late date of the review, 1984, Percy, if with more sober eyes, apparently still sees More as an agent of evangelization.)

In addition to the spiritual example of More (and never separate from it) Percy also sees in him a role model as both man and writer, the kind of writer that he himself had to become in a period when the sea of faith had already ebbed to a shallow lake. He, Percy, would be cunning, ironic, witty, cagey, devious, in brief, a trickster. Percy foregrounds these same qualities of More in the review:

[12]While More's martyrdom is not mentioned in the 1952 letter to Gordon, Percy would certainly have been aware of it and would surely have seen it even then as one of the qualities that gave More a special status. Moreover, I am concerned here to trace the evolution over Percy's lifetime of his view of More as man, writer, and saint.

[13]Percy expressed his high regard for More and Campion as martyrs on the occasion of his receiving the Campion Award at Loyola University in New Orleans in 1986 (Tolson, *Pilgrim* 462). For background information on the award, see *More Conversations* (127–28). Bertram Wyatt-Brown notes that "Blessed Thomas Percy" was certainly no Thomas More, being both "dim-witted" and "heedlessly brave" (351). He was, nevertheless, a martyr for the Faith, despite lacking both intellectual acumen and a plenitude of prudence.

> The man himself emerges, a complex man indeed, a man so *full of wit and irony that it is hard to know when he is speaking straight*; who loved his king and his church, who would die for his principles but was not above *deviousness* and flattery. . . . We look at the magnificent Holbein portrait, that attractive sharp English face, its complex *ironic* expression, and, like his biographer, we wonder about him. Perhaps this famous *jokester* had the last joke after all. There is no doubt about the courage, good humor and vast attractiveness of his martyrdom. Maybe in the end he had it both ways, presenting the best possible image for future generations, getting off one liners with his executioner, knowing exactly what he was doing and pleasing God too, succeeding at both and so having the last laugh. (2–3, emphasis added)[14]

It is easy enough to see how Percy would find in More a model for his own role as a writer who must, like Melville, like Joyce draw upon all the satirical, ironic, even devious tricks of his craft to make his fictions work their magic. But again, it is clear from this passage as a whole that More for Percy is a complex figure who cannot be pinned down to one simple fixed image or persona. He is both the ironist, jokester, and faithful martyr at one and the same time. Therein lies his broad appeal. But looked at broadly or narrowly, he is a vibrant model for Percy as man and writer, if not, of course, the only one.

The complex image of More evident in this passage is echoed and somewhat developed in scattered comments Percy makes in at least one letter, in interviews, and in the character of Tom More in *Love*.

[14]Similarly, Percy writes of Herman Melville: "The freedom and happiness of the artist is attested by his playfulness, his tricks, his malice, his underhandedness, his naughtiness, his hoodwinking the reader" (*Signposts* 202). And in Percy's essay, "A Novel About the End of the World," he says: "Like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, he calls on every ounce of cunning, craft, and guile he can muster from the darker regions of his soul" (*Message* 118). Given such repeated references, it becomes evident that when Percy writes in this way about other writers he is at the same time describing himself—and perhaps more that than anything else.

A 1970 letter to Shelby Foote contrasts Percy's protagonist with his saintly namesake, the former being "a whiskeyhead and horny all the time" (Tolson 147). More himself, notes Percy, might have been chronically horny, too, except for getting married, which was at least a partial remedy. The alternative he had considered was living as a Carthusian monk. In one of the fullest, non-fictional statements he makes about More, Percy alludes in a 1971 interview to using More in his fiction as a way "to de-Irish the American Catholic Church" in contrast to Edwin O'Connor, for instance. "He is both the most English of Englishmen and the most Catholic of Catholics," Percy observes, and allows that More is also one of his favorite saints (*Conversations* 46–47).[15] And in a 1985 interview, Percy observes another admirable trait of More's, one that would come to inform his fiction: "I guess my main cultural character would be the idea of the good English Christian knight: Sir Thomas More, who is a righteous man, *a good man, who'll fight. He is a warrior*" (*Conversations* 106, emphasis added). We encounter this trait both in *Love* and *Thanatos*, to one degree or another.

II.

One way to appreciate St. Thomas' value to Tom More, of course, lies in the various ways that Catholics generally relate to their saints: through knowing them, seeing them as models for behavior, and turning to them for aid and succor. Among other things, we will

[15]In this interview, and only in this one as far as I know, Percy alternates between the titles "Sir" and "Saint" in speaking of More. And of all the references in *Love*—I count a total of a dozen or so—in only one of those does the word "saint" appear. In lieu of any explanation by Percy, my hunch is that the use of "Sir" as title stems from his overall fictional strategy and suggests a regard for the sensibilities of his audience. On the one hand, he wants to draw on the power inherent in the name and person of Thomas More but on the other wants to avoid offending those whose might be put off by the Catholic term for those persons who have been formally recognized by the Church as living in the presence of God. "Sir" as title is historically accurate in any case.

see each of these values in some key passages from *Love in the Ruins* which reference St. More. The first allusion occurs early in the novel, as Dr. Tom More establishes his Catholic background and the family connection to Sir Thomas (*LR* 22). Several key points stand out in this passage. In line with his 1952 letter, Percy establishes Tom More and family as English Catholics, but not only that. Dr. More is a collateral descendant of Sir Thomas More; or at least, he adds, they share the surname. But the family, partly by virtue of clinging to the faith, met with a degree of difficulty in worldly affairs, became drifters, near failures, and settled *for*—not "in"—Louisiana (*LR* 22). In the passage immediately following, Tom reveals more details about his religious patrimony, which, importantly, sets up a sharp contrast between his ancestor and him:

> As for me, I was a smart boy and at the age of twenty-six bade fair to add luster to the family name for the first time since Sir Thomas More himself, that great soul, the dearest best noblest merriest of Englishmen. My contribution, I hasten to add, was in the realm of science not sanctity. Why can't I follow More's example, love myself less, God and my fellowman more, and leave whiskey and women alone? Sir Thomas More was merry in life and death and he loved and was loved by everyone, even his executioner, with whom he cracked jokes. By contrast, I am possessed by terror and desire and live a solitary life. My life is a longing, longings for women, for the Nobel Prize, for the hot, bosky bite of bourbon whiskey, and other great heart-wrenching longings that have no name. Sir Thomas was right, of course, and I am wrong. But on the other hand these are peculiar times. (*LR* 23)

Thus, the historical More's history and martyrdom serves, in part, as a foil for the modern Tom More of the novel. Where St. Thomas was sexually chaste, Tom is profligate; where the saint was moderate in his drinking habits, Tom is virtually an alcoholic (Marius xiii); where Thomas More enjoyed a successful career as lawyer, statesmen, and Christian humanist, the protagonist of the novel is a scientist who, although burning with gnostic ambition to invent a device to save

humanity from the Cartesian split between body and soul, runs into trouble making it work as the sparks fly upward; and finally, where saint Thomas was witty and full of good humor, Tom is possessed of terrors and ill-defined longings. So, while Tom claims the saint as kin, he is far from being like him, at least early on. The larger point to be made is that throughout this novel—but far less so in *Thanatos*—we consistently see Tom More in relation to Thomas More, whether for good or ill.

Despite the many differences, the two men do share at least one common experience, namely time spent in confinement. The historical More toward the end of his life was imprisoned until executed; in *Love* Tom is hospitalized for a time after his suicide attempt (in *Thanatos* he is in fact jailed after being convicted for trafficking in illegal drugs). About this experience Tom notes, "It is easy to understand how men do their best work in prison or exile," Sir Thomas being one of his examples (*LR* 106). More did indeed write some of his greatest spiritual works in prison, but as for Dr. More in Love, the great work he will do does not lie in his pet invention. Even though he has not entirely given up hopes for its ultimate, successful implementation, his true work will be the far more modest one of watching and waiting and ultimately having (*LR* 383). What he waits for is the man who will one day walk into his office as a "ghost-beast," riven by angelism-bestialism, and walk out a man, a "sovereign wanderer, lordly exile, worker and waiter and watcher" also (*LR* 383). He notes, in conclusion, that according to Sir Thomas, "Knowing, not women is man's true happiness" (*LR* 383). While Tom attributes the quotation to More, it sounds rather more like Thomas Aquinas. But no matter. It surely fits both saints.

In one of the richest of the references to More in the novel—which occurs in the poignant aftermath of Tom's attempted suicide—Percy collects several key strands of his overall vision when he presents his protagonist praying for aid through the agency of his hero-saint:

> Later [while in the hospital] lust gave way to sorrow and I prayed, arms stretched out like Mexican, tears streaming down

> my face. Dear God, I can see it now, why can't I see it other times, that it is you I love in the beauty of the world and in all the lovely girls and dear good friends, and it is pilgrims we are, wayfarers on a journey, and not pigs, nor angels. Why can I not be merry and loving like my ancestor, a gentle pure-hearted knight for our Lady and our blessed Lord and Savior? Pray for me Sir Thomas More. (*LR* 109)[16]

In this packed paragraph, in addition to the plea to More, we have a glancing look at Percy's sacramental vision of reality—"it is you I love in the beauty of the world"—which we find articulated more fully for example in "The Holiness of the Ordinary" (*Signposts* 369); there and here he touches on the motif of pilgrimage which he partly borrows from Gabriel Marcel's *Homo Viator* but makes completely his own.[17] In the same breath, he speaks of a classical Christian anthropology that More would have recognized, which both antedates and follows him, being at least as old as the author of Hebrews—"Thou didst make him a little lower than the angels" (2.7–9, RSV)—and as timeless as *Hamlet*, "in action how like an angel." (2.2.314).

With these references to angels, we observe again a signal theme of the novel, the angelism-bestialism that the More lapsometer is supposedly designed to cure. As a malady to which modern man is subject, this dualism is not one which seems to have afflicted St. Thomas More in particular, even if its origins can be traced as far

[16]While More was indeed a knight, we see him in his struggle with Henry acting more in the manner of his Master—as Prince of Peace—and less like St. Peter, who when he drew his sword was immediately admonished by the same Master: "I have chosen you for the mission of fighting not with such a sword but with the sword of the word of God" (More, *Sadness of Christ* 87). Thomas had been lessoned long before facing his great trials. The Tom More of both *Love* and *Thanatos* is also a fighter—engaged in a struggle with what he sees as powers of darkness, but his weapons are knowledge, intellect and, not least, courage.

[17]See Preface to Marcel's *Homo Viator* (7–12); *Signposts* (375); and *More Conversations* (137).

back as William of Occam (c. 1287–1347).[18] For Tom More, however, the Cartesian split of body and mind leads him into toggling between indulging in fleshly pursuits on the one hand and devising a mechanistic scheme as cure. Also here, Tom's calling on his ancestor and patron saint for aid in a time of tribulation should not escape our attention. Part of what is transparent once more is the sharp contrast between the spiritual state of Sir Thomas—"merry and loving . . . a gentle pure-hearted knight"—and that of our protagonist. Paradoxically, a sign of hope resides in the fact that Tom is now an ex-suicide, which means in the Percy universe that he has been "dispensed"—that is, freed—at least for the time being (*LC* 77). Having faced the prospect of suicide, it is not now an eminent threat. But for the near term, the crazy cycle continues of Walpurgis night, followed by repentance, and clear vision, only to begin all over again (*LR* 109).

Most of the rest of the allusions to Thomas More—four of which I touch on here—are brief and incidental, but add nevertheless to the pervasive sense of the saint's presence and, in some cases his power, in the novel:

On the occasion of Tom's dropping into the Love Clinic, he notes that Helga believes that he is Jewish in part because he has somewhat Jewish features like his ancestor, Sir Thomas More (*LR* 123). In addition to contributing to the sense of More's presence, it is a sidelong glance at a Percyean motif, the significance of the Jewish people and their experience—especially as it relates to the Christian revelation—which is developed more fully in *The Second Coming* (1980), *Thanatos*, and elsewhere (*Signposts* 312; *Lost* 248–49).

[18]Weaver argues: "The practical result of the nominalist philosophy is to banish the reality which is perceived by the intellect and to posit as reality [only] that which is perceived by the senses," thus leading ultimately to both empiricism and the Cartesian split (*Ideas* 3). Percy addresses the theme at some length also in "A Novel About the End of the World" (*Message* 113). One could perhaps make the case that the protagonist More was indeed afflicted by the angelism-bestialism syndrome and that the way he dealt with it was by a rigorous and even punitive self-discipline, including the hair shirt and self-flagellation.

When Tom goes to mass with his mother on Property Sunday (a high holy day for the schismatic American Catholic Church), he stands in the back and anticipates leading Lola Rhoades out into the gloaming that evening (*LR* 182). Although less interested in the state of the Church than in lusty Lola, he asks Sir Thomas to pray for him, Moon Mullins, and his poor church.

Prior to meeting with the clinic director, Tom notes that he is dying from a diseased lung. He cites Sir Thomas More to the effect that "[a] dying king . . . is apt to be wiser than a healthy king" (*LR* 203) and hopes that condition applies to a behaviorist like himself as well. Whatever the source for this alleged quotation—I have not been able to locate it—it also applies to Tom himself, who, facing death, may be a bit wiser for the experience. In his final confrontation with Art Immelmann when the latter is about to whisk Ellen off to Denmark, Tom, in his role as modern knight, calls once more on Sir Thomas to help him save the day: "*kinsman, saint, best dearest merriest of Englishmen, pray for me and drive this son of a bitch hence*" (*LR* 376). Apparently, the invocation works since the last they see of Art is his disappearing in a puff of smoke (377). Ellen may not be attuned to saints in general or Thomas More in particular, but what matters is that Tom himself is, now more so than earlier.

Finally, as the novel draws to a close, Tom goes to confession to Fr. Smith, after which the priest hands him a sackcloth and ashes, confession and penance marking his movement toward humility, self-knowledge, and a new beginning. Percy may also allude here to Thomas More's habit of wearing a hair shirt, among other forms of penance, as various critics have noted (Hardy 138).

In *Thanatos*, Percy's last fictional work, St. More plays a role as well, albeit a less prominent one. How do the two novels and their shared protagonist differ, how did such a marked change came about, and why**?** First, while Percy brings an earlier protagonist back to life, so to speak, he is not the same as in his earlier appearance, and his situation has changed as well. As John Desmond observes, *Love* is a futuristic satire depicting a time "near the end of the world" characterized by extreme factionalism, chaos, and revolution (622). *Thanatos*, on the other hand, depicts a present-day Louisiana

community in the aftermath of two world wars, the Holocaust, and a creeping dehumanization effected through advances in technology and pharmaceutical developments aimed at improving the human condition. Percy, of course, views the latter aim ironically, but the wild satire and humor of Love is mostly missing until the ending episodes (See *Age of Suicide* 249; *WP's Search* 218, 228–29). The Catholic faith and the sacraments, so prominent in Love, have only a vestigial presence in *Thanatos*. Only at the end do we see Tom More assisting at mass, practically his only visible connection to the Church.

The most important overall difference in the two novels, then, lies in the presentation of the character of Dr. More himself. From the "bad Catholic" of *Love*, who at one point had practiced his faith with serious commitment and even joy, we find in *Thanatos* a practicing psychiatrist who, to all appearances, puts more faith in Sigmund Freud than in Jesus Christ. The voice of faith has not, however, been totally silenced. In fact, far from it. It is, rather, here in the person of Fr. Smith that we hear it, that is, to the extent that he is able to articulate it given his own special problems with belief and emotional health in a world almost as broken as he is. The presentation of the novel's main character represents a drastic diminution of the persona of the saint for whom Dr. More is named. And we might well ask both why Percy chose to make this shift and what the effect of it is.

As for the first question, I suggest that for Percy to have Tom More invoke his patron saint as he did earlier would simply fall flat. Tom More of *Thanatos*, as a Freudian psychologist who, perhaps because of his life experiences in the intervening years (including his stint in prison), no longer sees calling upon his patron saint as effective. His faith is dormant, if not dead. I suggest also that Percy, having earlier met and formed a relationship with Robert Coles, patterned the Tom More of *Thanatos* somewhat after the famed psychologist, to whom, perhaps not incidentally, the book is dedicated.[19] Tom More in this

[19]The two had met in the early 1970's. Patrick Samway describes their relationship as spiritual kinship (304).

novel illustrates what happens to a character when he sets faith aside and operates largely in a secular mode.

Finally, and most importantly, Percy needed someone besides Tom More—even with his namesake saint in the deep background—to speak eloquently, if in a broken, imperfect manner to the fact of radical evil. That person turns out to be Fr. Smith who, as a young man, had witnessed the beginnings of the Nazi regime in Germany, even though he did not at the time realize the full import of what he had seen. In time, however, he does realize its meaning and its application to Feliciana and sees it as his mission, too, to convey his insight to Tom More as well so that he can act appropriately to address the evils of surreptitious mass drugging, pedophilia and child abuse in ways the priest cannot. The priest's name, Rinaldo, in fact means "counsel power." That suggests at least part of his function. As Desmond notes, "The priest's role as guide becomes explicit when he later tells More, 'You will have to choose,'" that is, between life and death (Desmond 231, 236). One would indeed have to have a certain sense of power and authority—whether arrogated or given—to counsel another about such a decision involving complex circumstances fraught with some personal risk for the one counseled.

Fr. Smith here, as in *Love*, is one of those Percy priests whom he paradoxically and intentionally derogates, as a literary strategy, in order to convey his point. As with Flannery O'Connor, he finds it useful "to throw the weight of circumstance against the character I favor. . . . The priest is right, therefore he can carry the burden of a certain social stupidity" (O'Connor 973). In Fr. Smith's case, this burden is certain crack-brained quality.

Strangely, or perhaps not so strangely after all, More seems to have difficulty appreciating what Fr. Smith tells him. He's not dense, but simply no longer attuned to what the priest has experienced and learned, as well as its implication for the current situation. Percy thus ironically soft-pedals one of the most important points in the novel in order to call even more attention to it by a strategic indirection. It is the same strategy used in presenting Will Barrett as utterly clueless about the meaning of baptism at the end

of *The Last Gentleman* (1966), where Jamie's baptism is the most important single action of the novel. Similarly, Binx Bolling wonders at the end of *The Moviegoer* (1961) if the Negro coming out of the church on Elysian Fields had experienced some "dim dazzling trick of grace" (235). It may indeed "be impossible to say," but just such moments of unperceived grace are the very ones that can lift human experience out of the slough of existential meaningless and despair in Percy's world view.[20]

In any case, there is little or no direct reference to Sir Thomas throughout the novel, apart from the continuing protagonist's name. One passage near the end, however, is significant, precisely because the saint has not been referenced until this moment. And this moment is most telling. In the aftermath of Dr. More's exposing the scheme concocted by John Van Dorn and Bob Comeaux, he converses with his now-Pentecostal wife who charges that Father Smith "still has his hooks in you," which he denies. To her retort, "He got you to say Mass with him," Tom replies, "That was back in June. It was my namesake's feast day. I could hardly refuse" (*TS* 354). He might deny, even to himself, that he is a faithful, practicing Catholic —and in a sense, that is quite true—but he still cannot refuse the priest's request.

Percy's character, like Percy himself, has a vital relationship with his patron. The hooks are in, willy nilly, whether one spins that positively or pejoratively. Tom More may have earlier abandoned the

[20]See Hawkins (65) for an acute commentary on the treatment of the varying degrees of Catholic "witness" in the novels which I have just lightly touched on here. This "witness" may, of course, be taken as another naming of crypto-Catholicism. A case could be made that some of Percy's characters are Catholics in spite of themselves. See Percy's comments on Will Barrett, that "frantic searcher after the truth, seeking God, demanding God" (*Conversations* 195), who at the end of *The Second Coming* tells Fr. Weatherbee "you seem to know something," which he (Will) needs to know also (196). The "something" he needs to know is actually a someone, the Incarnate Word—or Incarnate Love—who makes all human love possible and redeems it as well.

faith for all practical purposes, but partly through the agency of Fr. Smith—a strange, ineffectual priest similar to so many of Percy's Catholic clerics—he is now in position to make a return back into the fold. At least that seems to be the case; and even in this most message-driven of Percy's novels, Percy is still able at times to write small where Flannery O'Connor writes with large letters. In brief, while Thomas More does not loom large in *Thanatos*, he nevertheless makes a last-minute appearance that signifies for both Tom More, and likely for Percy himself, that the saint retains a spiritual power which Freud, for all his insights into the human psyche, could not begin to match. The road back for Tom More is not only watching and waiting for his practice to pick up, but more importantly getting reconnected to the Church. It is not an easy transition, especially for one who is no longer sure about what he believes, let alone gives it much thought (*TS* 363). Fr. Smith tells him he has been "deprived" (364), so it is not his fault. But Fr. Smith does not stop there. The priest sends Tom a coded message about "A Jewish girl, a visit from royalty. Gifts" (*TS* 370). In other words, the Feast of Epiphany is the next day. If Fr. Smith wants him to serve mass again, he most probably will. The darkness that had descended on Feliciana due to the Blue Boy project and the other associated evils can perhaps be dispelled, at least for Tom's spirit, by the messianic light from the East.

III.

While *Love* and *Thanatos* are thematically related to the historical figure of St. Thomas More, both novels are conspicuously different from More's treatise, *Utopia*. That of course should not be surprising. My intention here, in any case, is not to explore derivation or influence, let alone to engage in a full analysis of More's work, but simply to highlight a few affinities between *Utopia* and Percy's Tom More novels. The relationship may be designated in terms of three interrelated, common features: (1) the concept of utopia itself; (2) the comic or at least ironic perspective common to

each; and, (3) the treatment of certain moral issues, in particular pride and human fallibility, euthanasia and suicide.[21]

What needs to be made clear at the outset is More's purpose regarding the utopian concept. While some, like the English socialist, William Morris, have read *Utopia* as a virtual blueprint for an ideal society, more sober scholarship sees in it a work whose author (and persona), though giving free rein to an exposition of its supposedly attractive features by its chief promoter, Raphael Hythloday, nevertheless allows the reader to see certain problems in the utopian concept as well as its presentation. The irony of the work is subtle, but unmistakable. Subtlety aside, in the last book he wrote, More clearly puts himself outside the utopian camp: "But if we get so weary of pain and grief that we perversely attempt to change this world, this place of labor and penance, into a joyful haven of rest, *if we seek heaven on earth*, we cut ourselves off forever from true happiness" (*Sadness* 4; my emphasis).

As regards *Utopia*'s perspective and tone, the title itself is indicative. More puns on the Greek-derived term: "Utopia" means, for one, "a good place"; but it also means "nowhere," a place, in other words, that does not and cannot exist.[22] While the first name of its promoter, Raphael, means "God's healer," his surname denotes "peddler of nonsense" (Miller, Introduction, x). While not definitive, perhaps, in themselves, such clues cannot be ignored or simply

[21]One minor similarity between the two works, which could be coincidental, is that the geographical areas represented in each are divided into four parts. In the case of *Utopia*, the sections are exactly equal and harmonious (67). In *Love*, equality and harmony are markedly absent. If Percy is intentionally alluding to the four sections of *Utopia*, his purpose would seem to be to point up both sharp differences and inequities in Feliciana (*LR* 12–16) as opposed to the ideal state of things in Utopia.

[22]See Harp, "Afterword" (*Utopia* 146). See also Miller's "Introduction" *Utopia* (viii–ix). In the last work he wrote, More clearly puts himself outside the utopian camp: "But if we get so weary of pain and grief that we perversely attempt to change this world, this place of labor and penance, into a joyful haven of rest, *if we seek heaven on earth*, we cut ourselves off forever from true happiness" (*Sadness* 4, my emphasis).

brushed aside. Nor can Hythloday's presentation itself, where he references *pride* as a chief stumbling block to selling the whole world on the wonder of this ideal commonwealth: it is an "infernal serpent, pervading the human heart, [that] keeps men from reforming their lives" (*Utopia* 133). Taken together, these clues suggest More is ambivalent toward the viability of such an enterprise. The ironic mask is momentarily dropped.

In an insightful essay on Percy and Gnosticism, Cleanth Brooks draws on Eric Voegelin's commentary on Utopia; the latter writes in part: "More is well aware that this perfect state cannot be achieved in this world: man's lust for possessions is deeply rooted in original sin, in *superbia* [pride] in the Augustinian sense" (Brooks 204; Voegelin 101). This is Tom More's great fault as well. Beyond the difficulty imagining that anyone would want to live in a monolithic society demanding such conformity, we are left finally with an apparently unresolvable dilemma or double-bind: the only way such an ideal place could be introduced is for those who have already been formed by it to plant it anew. That is, "nowhere can such institutions be introduced except where they have already been introduced—nowhere" (Miller, Introduction xviii). Such a logical-logistical obstacle, nevertheless, does not prevent some from trying, again and again, whether in More's sixteenth-century Europe or in the United States some centuries later. The main value of the book is as an instigator of thought about how to improve an actual existing society—incrementally, practically, realistically—and to do so with awareness that the enterprise calls for humility at every turn.

Whether Percy ever commented directly on More's *Utopia*, it is certain that he would have been aware its applicability to *Love*, which at least in part falls into the same genre of literature. Percy, too, sees in the concept of utopia clear potential for examining human pride and fallibility, although his manner differs sharply from that of St. More. The case of Dr. Tom More and his overly ambitious plans for his lapsometer as curative tool for the Cartesian split is a cautionary tale, as Desmond puts it, suggesting what happens when man elects to correct what he sees as the flawed work of the Creator (*Age of Suicide* 249).

Wildly comic in contrast to St. More's more subtle, buttoned-up presentation, *Love* does not make it easy either, though, for a reader to discern where exactly Tom More and his creator stand on the different social-political groups and issues presented: "It will please no one," Percy wrote to his friend Shelby Foote. "It will infuriate Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Southerners, liberals, and conservatives, hawks, and doves" (*Correspondence* 148). Something to offend everybody, as Percy says elsewhere (*Signposts* 340). Where More's *Utopia* depicts a supposedly ideal society—at least according to certain criteria—*Love* gives us a portrait of dystopia. As Dr. More says, "The U.S.A. didn't work! Is it even possible that from the beginning it never did work? [T]hat the thing always had a flaw in it[?]" (*LR* 56). In Tom More's view, the country failed in its mistreatment of black people (*LR* 56–57), whereas racism is not an ostensible consideration in *Utopia*.[23] Additionally, the idealized rhetoric of the American dream—the shining city set on a hill—was perhaps inherently flawed, that such a society was and is simply not realistically possible. More fundamentally, America's failings, Percy might affirm with Brooks and Voegelin, lay the worm of Original Sin.

Tom More falls personally and blindly into pride as he sets about to correct what has become in his view a dystopia: "I know what is wrong! I hit on something, made a breakthrough. . . . I can save the terrible God-blessed Americans from themselves! With my invention!" (*LR* 58). What he finds more than once, of course, is that he cannot even save himself unaided, let alone the country. At the story's end, though, he begins to see where he went wrong, returns to the sacraments—confession and the Eucharist in particular—and sets about to rebuild his practice.

[23]At least tangentially, the race issue may be another commonality between the two works. Clarence Miller points to Hythloday as an advocate of "colonial exploitation" and "ethnic cleansing" (x). Clearly Tom More—and Percy as well?—is selective in identifying the country's sins. Some would point to white colonizer's treatment of Native Americans, as well as other ethnic groups. See also Percy on race in "A Novel About the End of the World" (*Message* 117.)

Another theme, or pair of related themes, that Love shares with More's work, is euthanasia-suicide. In *Utopia*, Hythloday describes the practice of euthanasia as a merciful and entirely voluntary process. When life becomes extremely painful and a heavy burden to all concerned, a citizen who agrees that death would be preferable can either starve himself or be put painlessly to sleep. On the other hand, voluntary suicide for other reasons and without official approval is condemned (96–97). It is not at all likely that St. More would countenance the euthanasia protocol of *Utopia*, nor elective suicide, though some might argue that his own martyrdom is a case of state-assisted suicide, a subject too complex to engage fully here. Suffice it to say that the fact that a state or sovereign chooses to attempt to enforce its will against an individual through capital punishment in no wise touches upon the nature and validity of a person's motives that lead to his becoming the target of it.[24] Regarding More's motive, one way to state it is that he sought to maintain, at the cost of his physical life, a seamless coherence between his religious beliefs and the public words he used—or refrained from using—to affirm them, irrespective of the pressure applied by the secular monarch. He had another king to serve higher in rank and power than Henry.

In *Love*, Percy addresses both suicide and euthanasia but from a rather different perspective than More's. We have already noted the passage in which his protagonist reflects on his failed effort at killing himself. For Percy, here and elsewhere, the treatment of that theme owes far more to his own family history, on the personal side, and to Camus and Sartre, in literary-philosophical terms, than it ever could to More (*Conversations* 164–65). In *Lost in the Cosmos*, (1983) as in the 1977 interview just-referenced, Percy formulates the notion of the "ex-suicide," that is, one who having seriously considered

[24]In a discussion of martyrdom in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, More's spokesman notes that one should not desire martyrdom—that would be prideful—but rather seek God's will alone and ask for his help in facing it if it comes. In the same work, Anthony also counsels against suicide in Book 2, sections 15–16.

self-murder decides against it and, voila!, has a totally new lease on life. One is dispensed (*Lost* 77–78).[25]

Percy's treatment of euthanasia in the novel is more to the point. It is in fact one of the main targets of Tom More's crusade against the operators of the Qualitarian Center. Even in the midst of his obsession with the More lapsometer, Tom sees malignity behind their supposedly pure motives. While Tom's confrontation with Buddy Brown in the Pit risks the distraction of theatrical hijinks, this powerful episode clearly shows where he—as well as his author—stands regarding the value of human life. For Buddy Brown, "It's the quality of life that counts" (*LR* 197), a phrase that with a certain sleight-of-hand reduces life from a multi-dimensional whole to only one, admittedly attractive, component of it. (The phrase is striking less for what it includes than what it leaves out.) As Dr. More notes, mindful of the case of Mr. Ives, at stake are the right to know what the qualitarians are preparing for him (an "exitus"), and more importantly the right to choose life on his own terms instead of an early death provided by others (*LR* 224). As it turns out, Mr. Ives proves himself, with Tom's help, to be the farthest thing from a viable candidate for the "Happy Isles of Georgia" in any event.

Much of what has been asserted here about *Love*, especially relative to *Utopia*, can also be said of *Thanatos*, but the stakes are higher there. Thanatos expands on the great life and death issues with added considerations. Besides suicide and euthanasia, there are infanticide, personhood, the gradual, almost imperceptible betrayal of the Hippocratic Oath, and, not least, child abuse (*TS*, 35–36, 127, 199). The Tom More of *Love* is motivated by gnostic pride in his quest to heal the angelism-bestialism that has wreaked much havoc in Paradise, whereas Dr. More of *Thanatos*—having been chastened and humbled by his prison experience—has returned to his practice, if not whole, more in touch than ever before with his personal diagnostic skill, which enables him, more modestly, to detect that "something strange is occurring in our region" (1). That "something" is in fact a massive if localized project to bring about a

[25]See also commentary by Montgomery (56).

modern utopia in Feliciana—the key targets being crime, teen suicide, and AIDS (*TS* 3, 218)—but one with side effects that make the cure highly problematic. Individual human consciousness for one is adversely affected, as strikingly seen in the case of Mickey LeFaye who shoots her prize horses. Also, a negative effect on Tom More's wife is marital infidelity. The fundamental problem in short is that in the interest of improving the quality of life, the program undermines the human person as such. More's goal then becomes to counter it, which he does, as previously noted.

While *Love* is an apocalyptic and futuristic novel about a dystopia in which Tom More participates in a Faustian scheme to heal the Cartesian split, the riven soul of man, *Thanatos*, we may say, following John Desmond, is an admonitory tale of what could happen if the qualitarians and utopianists are not checked in their gnostic ambitions to improve society through mass surreptitious drugging, while at the same time engaging in child abuse and pedophilia. In the latter case, while Tom More is heavily implicated in the medical complex of Fedville, he still discerns the dangers of the schemes of Van Dorn and Comeaux and, at considerable risk to himself, takes steps to dismantle the Blue Boy project and close the Belle Ame school. And like *Love*, Percy's last novel—for all the grimness of its subject matter and what many have referred to as its heavy-handed, didactic quality—has a happy, if qualified, ending.

Conclusion

The relationship between St. Thomas More and Walker Percy, especially as regards *Love*, is rich, complex, and instructive—and, one might say, almost inevitable. We can hardly imagine that novel—if not *Thanatos*—without the spiritual and even literary presence of the English saint hovering in the background, serving as example and guide for Percy the man and writer—himself an ironic, devious wordsmith, trickster, jokester—and at the same time serving (Thomas More, that is) as role model and foil for the novelist's protagonist. The extent to which St. Thomas aided in the conversion of other Southerners, as Percy, Gordon and Tate, had hoped, is unknown.

Perhaps Percy even then was being more ironic jokester than prophet. In any case, such is the stuff of speculation. Clearly, though, More played a significant role in Percy's own pilgrimage and in his career as a novelist in the same Catholic tradition that helped form the saint. Finally, I would suggest that Percy's novels may have helped to "hand . . . along a ways in their dark journey" a number of his readers toward that tradition, whether they fully enter it or not (MG 233).

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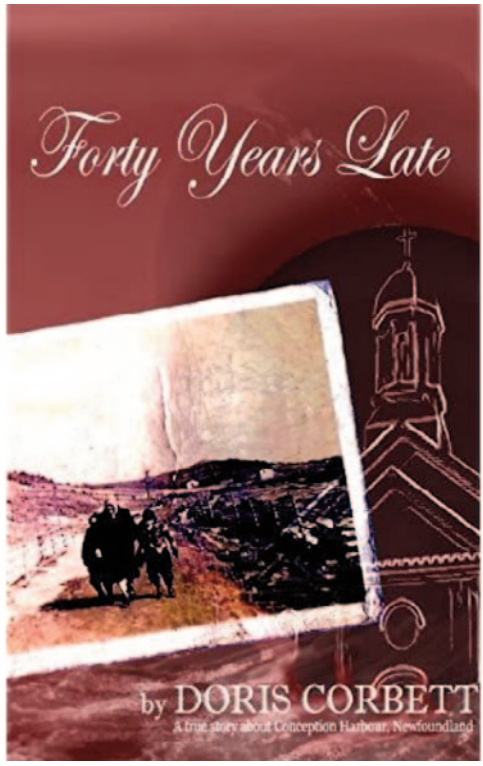
Purple Martin Houses

In between water and sky, dusk and dark,
the purple martins circle home, pausing
to dip their wings in the pond that ruffles
like the pages of the book in my lap.
The martins tilt and slide on their forked tails
and tapered wings for dragonflies
and smaller insects I can't see but are flying
above the water. Iridescent blue when their backs
catch the flattening light of the sun, the martins,
like the swallows that join them, are a prelude
to the night, which is slowly rising like steam,
the air dewy with humidity. Where their wings
touch the water they leave an untranslatable
language behind, a script that disappears
over and over like the days that disappear
into the numbness of time.

I sit here nightly as if this in-between
is somehow connected to the in-between
I've lived in since my son died,
waiting for the last martins to fly into
the apartment complex of gourds my neighbor
erected in her back yard. I try to imagine
my son's spirit flying into what Charles Wright
playfully called *Home sweet home* in a poem
about swallow nests. My neighbor,
Sheila, who works as a nurse, and years back
helped me understand what was happening
as my mother died, told me Native Americans
saw the birds as symbols of good fortune.
I do feel lucky, even if I can't make any sense
of saying so. As the martins hostel-up, I think of
their throaty chirps in the pre-dawn hours,
always the first birds to sing in the morning.

–Robert Cording


Forty Years Late
by DORIS CORBETT
A true story about Conception Harbour, Newfoundland

Preserving Their "Womanly Ways": The Story of a Wild Woman, a Spinster, and a Memorizer

Judith Musser
La Salle University

Forty Years Late: A True Story about Conception Harbour, Newfoundland (2010) is a memoir written by the late Doris Corbett (1938–1998) and published by her cousin Marie Corbett. It is a brief story, thirty pages of text, in which the adult Doris remembers events that happened when she was eleven years old from 1949–1951 in her Catholic parish in Conception Harbour, Newfoundland. The story centers on the interactions between three adults in the community: Father Casey, who is the parish priest at the time; Theresa Ghaney Corbett, or "Mom," who is Doris' grandmother; and Miss Tobin, the woman to whom Doris addresses her memoir.

Doris begins her story with an apology to Miss Tobin on behalf of the Conception Harbour community for not protecting her from her tormentor, the priest. Father Casey had thrown Miss Tobin out of the priest's house, the only home she had ever known; he had banished her from entering the church for worship; and he forbade people in the parish to give her shelter or food. The narrative begins on the night that Miss Tobin knocked on the door of her grandmother's home: "I can still hear the sound of your knock on our

back-porch door that October evening in 1949. It reverberates in my being" (D. Corbett 2). Theresa Corbett defied the priest's orders and opened her door to Miss Tobin, invited her to join the family at the supper table, and then prepared a room for her to stay, a room that Miss Tobin would occupy for two years.

This short memoir, self-published by Doris' cousin, Marie Corbett, twelve years after Doris' death, is initially appreciated for the remarkable incident in which a woman stood up to an oppressive man in power and the impact this act had on a young girl. The memoir could easily go unnoticed by anyone outside the Conception Harbour community; it is not mentioned in any anthology of Canadian Women writers,[1] Doris Corbett is not included in any list of Newfoundland writers, and the publication record of the memoir indicates a limited readership.[2] However, there are significant applications and insights in this story that contribute to cultural and women's studies. The story is grounded in the culture of Newfoundland, exposes the characteristics of an outport community, and reveals a deeply ingrained understanding of the requirements of hospitality. Moreover, the type of hospitality that Theresa Corbett offers to Miss Tobin illustrates a specific affinity to the social and political implications rooted in the theory of feminist hospitality. Because the story involves the Catholic church, it presents multiple opportunities to examine the roles of women in the church and the influence that feminist theology has on reading and interpreting patriarchy in church doctrine and practice. Finally, the point of view of the memoir is complex. Corbett writes in the first person, but switches to a plural first person to represent the entire Conception Harbour community. She is also remembering

[1]There is a collection of Doris Corbett's research of Ellen Scripps Booth and Nellie Beveridge Gray archived through the Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. http://www.cranbrook.edu/sites/default/files/ftpimages/120/misc/misc_82568.pdf

[2]According to Marie Corbett, the original print order was 300 and about 30 Kindle books have been sold. She also mentions she wishes she had more hard copies because the interest in the book is steadily growing (D. Corbett. E-mail to the author. 13 September 2019).

events that happened when she was eleven-years old and writing about them through her adult lens. The young Doris charts her growth from her own prejudices against Miss Tobin and her fears of how Father Casey will respond to her grandmother's act of defiance. Ultimately, Doris recognizes, forty years later, the courage of both her grandmother and Miss Tobin to act against the abuse of power. She articulates that their courage came from the "profound commitment of two women to their womanly ways" (D. Corbett 30).

Newfoundland is Canada's fourth largest island and has its own time zone. Because of its geographical isolation on the edge of North America, the official Canadian travel website encourages visitors to visit this out-of-the-way place by emphasizing that "Newfoundland . . . has a reputation for being friendly. Warm and welcoming, fun loving and funny to the core, the people here are also known for their natural creativity, unique language, and knack for storytelling" ("Discover"). This description is certainly enticing for those of us who are "come from aways." Perhaps a more successful advertisement for Newfoundland came when the world witnessed how the town of Gander, Newfoundland became an "oasis of kindness" on 9/11 when thirty-eight planes, carrying nearly 6,700 people, were forced to land. According to one of the passengers who was stranded with his family, Gander became "the poster child for how hospitality and just a sheer act of humanity should be because they had such a high level of open arms, and come in and welcome and here's my house" (qtd. in Lackey).

The response of the people of Gander demonstrates the basic constructs of hospitality. These statements from Newfoundlanders quoted in Lackey's article express the basic principles of hospitality:

> "Everyone looks at us and says that's an amazing thing that you did, and the bottom line is I don't think it was an amazing thing, I think it was the right thing you do," says Diane Davis, 53, a now-retired teacher who helped 750 people housed at the town's elementary school. "What we consider the most simple thing in life is to help people," says Mayor Claude Elliott, who retires this month after serving as the town's leader for 21 years.

> "You're not supposed to look at people's color, their religion, their sexual orientation—you look at them as people."

Theresa Corbett, fifty-two years earlier and 286 kilometers south, was a precursor to this Newfoundlander trait. Enacting hospitality, however, is not a simple thing. The mechanisms of offering hospitality generate complex beliefs about gender and power and Doris Corbett's story about her grandmother provides a compelling example of this. For Theresa Corbett, opening the door to Miss Tobin was more than an act of kindness and the right thing to do; she performed a daring act of resistance and social justice.

Maurice Hamington articulates a context for using the term "feminist" to qualify hospitality. He argues that feminist hospitality offers

> unique and compelling ethical insights that can invigorate and expand the notion of hospitality. Because feminism is a social-justice movement concerned with intersections of oppression, attaching the qualifier "feminist" to hospitality is intended to bring a mature body of justice analysis and sensibilities to the notion of hospitality. (22)

Hamington adds that "feminist hospitality must consciously resist forms of disempowering caregiving" (24). Theresa Corbett's hospitality demonstrates her attention to the possibility of disempowerment on a very basic level by resisting dictates of power that stem all the way back to ancient Rome and Greece. According to Tracy McNulty, historically "the host is almost invariably male" (xxvii). In ancient narratives, the woman was an extension of the male relative or the master of the home and thus in her role as hostess, she didn't have the power to act independently. We learn in Corbett's memoir that Theresa's husband, "Pop," was employed as a high-steel worker in the States during these two years. Without the presence of master of the home, Theresa Corbett enacted caregiving through her own self-claimed power. Hilda Chaulk Murray documents that a woman's role in Newfoundland outports from 1900–1950 comprised

of more than 50% of the work and responsibility in ensuring the survival of the community. She was not acting on behalf of her husband, as is clearly demonstrated in Theresa Corbett's words to Miss Tobin at the door; "Miss Tobin, you can stay here as long as you like. I will never turn anyone away from my door. . . . Doris, go upstairs and clear out your room because that's where I'm going to put Miss Tobin" (D. Corbett 5). The singular pronoun, used twice, emphasizes that performing hospitality that night was her singular act.

In this speech we also see how Theresa Corbett claimed power over property. McNulty contends that the male, the historic holder of property, was empowered "by his ability to offer up or dispose of his personal property in furtherance of his hospitality" (xxxiii–xxxiv). Theresa Corbett not only offered Miss Tobin food, but she also made available a room in the home, her granddaughter's room. She enacted a radical change in the male host's relationship to property by giving a designated space in the master's house for Miss Tobin to use with no constraints on time. In addition, this act of hospitality temporarily displaced Doris, who is instructed to "take her clothes and schoolbooks and put them in Mom's room across the hall" (D. Corbett 5). Hamington postulates that hospitality "can be truly disruptive because the "I" is no longer the same after confronting the guest" (26). As will be discussed later, Doris was a not-so-willing hostess and was altered by this experience.

The more powerful resistance engendered in Theresa Corbett's hospitality was not in response to her husband's role as master of the house, but in her response to another form of patriarchy, the Catholic Church, here embodied by Father Casey. The seat of worship for the parish in Conception Harbour was St. Anne Roman Catholic Church. From 1930–1949, Rev. John Scully was the priest, with four curates who served with him. In 1948, Father W. H. Casey, promoted to Monsignor sometime during his tenure, served St. Anne until 1961(Newfoundland's Grand Banks). We learn in the memoir that Miss Tobin was Father Scully's niece and his housekeeper in "The Palace," the priest's home. When Father Scully died, Father Casey replaced him. According to Doris, Father Casey was the antithesis of Father Scully; Scully was kindly, liked his drink, was not feared by

children, encouraged students, and wasn't too concerned with record keeping. Father Casey, on the other hand, was stern and violent in his actions and his words, greatly feared by the community of adults and children, and devoted to keeping track of monetary records and scholarly records. "Families who had not paid their annual church dues of $12 were 'in for it,' their names roared out in damnation from the Sunday morning pulpit" (D. Corbett 7). In addition, Father Casey refused to bless the corpse of a devoted parishioner because, in life, she had not paid her dues. Father Casey often visited the Catholic school to assess the progress of the students and those whom he felt should do better "received a blow or two to the head" (D. Corbett 9). His physical abuse was not only meted out to slow students; Father Casey physically abused Miss Tobin. Doris mentions this abuse twice in her memoir: "I'll never forget how shocked Mom and I were when you showed us your bruised body, covered with black and blue welts from your struggles against Father Casey in the back of the church as he threw you out the door before mass" (D. Corbett 14). Her second memory focuses on the sound of the abuse: "How could we hear the blows against you and turn deaf ears to your struggles while your tormenter violently threw you out the doors of the church before he suited up for mass?" (D. Corbett 2).

With this characterization of the priest in mind, I look again at Theresa Corbett's act of hospitality in a more focused light. Father Casey appears a violent and powerful man and thus the two women took great risk. Months before this October night, Miss Tobin had been trying to stay alive by sleeping in barns and outside shelters. She had not sought out hospitality from any other parishioner and her visit to the Corbett home was her first in the thirty odd years she lived in the Harbour. Doris suggests that Miss Tobin was motivated to find shelter that particular night because "the weather had come," further evidenced by the freezing of Corbett's Gully (D. Corbett 2). Miss Tobin was forced to seek shelter, but her choice to come to the Corbett home is not explained; Doris implies that the family's reputation for kindness, particularly her grandmother's sympathy for those deemed unacceptable in the community, may have been part of the reason.[3]

What is more significant is how Miss Tobin initiated this request for hospitality; she knocked, twice. Doris makes a point about the oddity of this gesture: "I believe your knock was the first on our door that I remember. In those days, no one knocked on your door in Newfoundland outports. They still don't. Rude as it seems, folks just walked in" (D. Corbett 2). As Theresa Corbett was making her way to answer the door, Miss Tobin "knocked again, a more insistent knock this time" (D. Corbett 3). Miss Tobin and Teresa Corbett share many common identities (both are women, white, Catholic, and members of the same parish), but because Miss Tobin had been excommunicated, she was cast in the role of Other by Father Casey. Because of her otherness, she used an outsider's method of entering a home; her decision to knock underscored her recognition that she has now been identified as the Other in this community. In addition, when she knocked, Miss Tobin gave Teresa Corbett a choice of whether to accept her request. Miss Tobin initiated the act of requesting hospitality fully aware that she was going against the dictates of the priest and that she was also putting Theresa Corbett at risk.

Hamington identifies a specific element of feminist hospitality that is clearly illustrated in the moment Theresa Corbett opened the door and invited Miss Tobin into her house. He writes:

> If feminist hospitality is to offer an alternative approach to personal, social, and political relationships, the power to forgive is an important tool in maintaining reciprocity and dialogue. . . . Having allowed the guest into proximity, the host . . . has been made vulnerable by taking a risk. (30)

[3]Doris's uncle Joe was born with Downs syndrome and Doris refers to his unique relationship with Miss Tobin throughout the story. Doris also makes it a point to note that her grandmother treated Joe with great love, patience, and respect. Doris discusses her own "troubles" after she learns from her friends that she is a "bastard" (D. Corbett 10). Her mother, Philomena, became pregnant out of wedlock, delivered Doris in Conception Bay, and then left for the States, never to be seen again by her family. Like Miss Tobin, Doris is the recipient of Theresa Corbett's loving grace, for she is raised in the Corbett home like a daughter.

Perhaps one might suggest that Miss Tobin needs to be forgiven for putting Theresa Corbett at risk by requesting hospitality; if so, then Theresa Corbett, by opening the door, has forgiven her. The more powerful act of forgiveness is embedded in the mystery that surrounds the cause of Miss Tobin's excommunication by the priest. According to Boudinhon, canon law identifies two forms of excommunication. The first is *sententiae ferendae*. This is where the person excommunicated is subject to a canonical process or trial. The more common excommunication is *latae sententiae* where someone, in committing a certain act, incurs the penalty without any canonical process. It seems that the second type of excommunication was enacted against Miss Tobin since there is no public trial described in the memoir; however, the mystery is that we are never told what sin Miss Tobin allegedly committed to merit this punishment.

Boudinhon also identifies eight offenses that automatically result in excommunication; five of these apply to non-clerical people: a person who is an apostate, heretic, or schismatic; a person who desecrates the Eucharist; a person who physically attacks the pope; a person who procures an abortion; and a person who is an accomplice to an action that has an automatic excommunication penalty (#). What is important is that *latae sententiae* excommunications are usually not known to the public unless the individual committed the action in a public manner. Thus, most likely, Theresa Corbett had no idea why Miss Tobin was excommunicated. Members of the Corbett family to this day do not know the cause.[4] Theresa Corbett didn't ask, discuss, postulate, or theorize when she opened the door. Hospitality was given, no questions asked.

Rahner articulates that those who are excommunicated are barred from receiving the Eucharist and other sacraments and from taking an active part in the liturgy (413). However, they are urged to retain a

[4]According to Marie Corbett, there is speculation that in fact Miss Tobin never committed an excommunicable sin. Some members of the Corbett family believe that Father Casey removed Miss Tobin from her role as housekeeper at The Palace in order to ensure that his rumored sexual affair with a woman would be kept private.

relationship with the Church, as the goal is to encourage them to repent and return to active participation. Father Casey's excommunication of Miss Tobin goes beyond these restrictions, for he prohibits the people in the parish to give food or shelter to Miss Tobin. Theresa Corbet has no control over what is prohibited in the house of God, but she does claim power in her own house and, in doing so, defied the two additional restrictions mandated by Father Casey. Notably, she feeds Miss Tobin; the bread and the cup are not offered to Miss Tobin in the house of God; they are offered, symbolically, in Teresa Corbett's house. Thus, Theresa Corbett illustrates that "[h]ospitality is an ethical disposition toward the Other that is capable of transcending individual transgressions through forgiveness to maintain a relationship of care" (Hamington 32).

"If feminist hospitality seeks a radical openness to the Other that is both disruptive and connective, its antithesis is revenge" (Hamington 31). Knowing Father Casey's potential for violence, the reader has some relief that the repercussions of Theresa Corbett's act of hospitality and Miss Tobin's reception of that hospitality did not result in more immediate and drastic punishment.[5] Father Casey, as well as the community, did enact subtle acts of judgement against the Corbett family. Theresa Corbett was snubbed by the other women of the parish and Doris remembered the whispers: "The nerve of Theresa Corbett to go against the priest. Who does she think she is?" (D. Corbett 24–25). Doris knew that if the nuns found out that Miss Tobin was living in her bedroom, her life at school would not be very happy. Len, Doris' uncle, was denied his request of Father Casey to provide a required signed document that would allow him to pursue a teaching career. Doris concluded that since "[m]om had given [Miss Tobin] shelter in her home, she had signed a social death certificate in the Harbour, taking Len, Joe, and me with her" (D. Corbett 14).

[5]The ending of the story is not a happy one. While delivering a letter at the post office, Miss Tobin is suddenly, secretly, and forcibly taken to a mental hospital in St. Johns. Doris blames Father Casey who "finally succeeded in removing you from the Harbour for good" (D. Corbett 27).

There is one confrontation between Father Casey and Theresa Corbett. Doris witnessed the moment and her memory of it is revealing. The meeting occurred sometime during the first week of Advent and thus Miss Tobin would have been living in the Corbett home for about six weeks. It was the tradition in the parish to hold a week-long evangelical event called "the Mission" in which "clerical warriors" traveled to different parishes to deliver nightly sermons (D. Corbett 15). One of these sermons was specifically addressed to women and because Doris was of the age to attend this "women-only sermon," she was excited to participate (D. Corbett 15). The text for the sermon, not surprisingly, was Genesis 3.16: "To the woman he said, 'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you'" (New International Version). The visiting priest reminded the women that

> Eve was not made in the image of God like Adam was. She was but a rib from his body. Yet it was she who disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Woman caused the downfall of man, and now all women ever born, except the Virgin Mary had to bear the guilt, shame and responsibility of Eve's evil act." (D. Corbett 18)

Doris then writes that after the sermon, "the condemned audience . . . bore the legacy in our soul and in our wombs. By 10:00 p.m., we were all thoroughly convinced of our evilness" (D. Corbett 18).

If feminism imparts a perspective on hospitality, it most certainly has a response to religion and, in this case, the Catholic Church. That response has been ardently and intellectually voiced by Mary Daly, a radical feminist theologian, academic, and writer who happened to be greatly admired by Doris Corbett in her later years (M. Corbett "Interview"). In her second book *Beyond God the Father*, Daly devotes one particular chapter to analyzing how the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve as told in Genesis "continues to color the function of the theological imagination . . . [and] has in fact affected the doctrines and laws that concern women's status in society and . . .

has contributed to the mind-set of those who continue to bring out biased, male-centered ethical theories"(44–45). Daly contends that women are conditioned to accept such theories:

> Patriarchal religion adds to the problem by intensifying the process through which women internalize the consciousness of the oppressor. The males' judgement having been metamorphosed into God's judgement, it becomes the religious duty of women to accept the burden of guilt, seeing the self with male chauvinist eyes. . . . Women who are conditioned to live out the abject role assigned to the female sex actually appear to "deserve" the contempt heaped upon "the second sex." (49)

Doris and the other young women in the congregation, upon hearing the sermon, fall into this trap. They accept the role assigned to the female sex not only in their souls, the center of their spiritual beings, but also in their wombs, the uniquely female body part from which life begins. Theresa Corbett, however, clearly does not internalize this message.

The sermon ended and everyone had left the church except for Doris, her grandmother, and Father Casey who was at the back of the church "pacing back and forth, looking toward us, grinding his teeth" (D. Corbett 18–19). His impatience was clear; he turned the lights off and then paced louder and faster; Theresa Corbett, undaunted, remained in prayer. When she finished, well aware of the Father's growing impatience and desire to talk with her, she slowly rose from the pew and meticulously dressed Doris for the long, cold walk home. She buttoned and belted her coat, tied her wool cap more snuggly, pulled up the collar of her coat, and checked to see that her mittens were secure. She was arming her granddaughter for a battle against the cold, but she was also metaphorically arming her for the battle that they would face at the back of the church.

The confrontation is actually a very short and very direct conversation. The dialogue is summarized below:

> Theresa Corbett: Good evening, Father Casey.
> Father Casey: Mrs. Corbett, I understand you have Miss Tobin

at your place and that she has been there for some time now.
Theresa Corbett: Yes, Father. I have.
Father Casey: Mrs. Corbett, do you know you have Miss Tobin in your home against my wishes?
Theresa Corbett: Yes, Father Casey, I do.
Father Casey: Well, do you know you have her against the bishop's wishes?
Theresa Corbett: Yes, Father Casey, I know that Miss Tobin is in my home against your wishes. I did not know that she is there against the bishop's wishes. But, Father, I will write the bishop myself and see what he has to say to me.
Father Casey: Look, I didn't mean to say that you had Miss Tobin against the bishop's wishes, but he does know that she is living in your home.
Theresa Corbett: Good night, Father Casey.
(D. Corbett 20–21)

This is the one and only conversation that Doris remembers between Father Casey and her grandmother. The encounter should have been one in which the priest had complete control. It took place in his building where he presides and it occurred after a sermon reminding women of their place in the church and in society. Doris's imagination anticipated that "he would beat her and me too and throw us down the icy steps that left from the church to the road" (D. Corbett 20). But Father Casey makes no physical movement to either prevent Doris and her grandmother from leaving the church or to remove them physically, as he had done with Miss Tobin.

In fact, it is Theresa Corbett who is in control. She first manipulated the timing of the meeting, by utilizing a sacrament of the church (prayer) in order to manipulate not only when that the conversation took place, but to test the patience of Father Casey. It is Theresa Corbett who began and ended the conversation. More importantly, Theresa's responses to the priest were truthful and simple. Father Casey, on the other hand, was not completely honest. He stated that the bishop also wished that Miss Tobin not receive shelter from the community. When Theresa stated that she will write to

the bishop to check on this, Father Casey appears caught in his lie and begins to backpedal. Mary Daly would suggest that Theresa Corbett embodies the Wild Woman, one of the many names she attributes to women who rebel against patriarchy. In particular, Daly writes that the doublespeak of those men in power can make even the "Wildest of Women . . . feel daunted" (*Amazon Grace* 32). Daly then asks, "How can we escape and surmount this foreground hell of Biggest Lies? (*Amazon Grace* 33). Her answer is as follows:

> We can leap over the patriarchs' war/wall of words by hearing through them, refusing to be distracted by them from Realizing our powers. . . . By Re-Calling our Power we can Re-Call the Race of Radiant Words. . . . This happens when Wild Women practice Ontological Courage in its various manifestations, including the Courage to hear Forth a New Semantic Field—a context in which the bullies' Biggest Lies are cracked open—and Everything Changes." (*Amazon Grace* 33, capitalizations in the original)

Father Casey evoked "doublespeak" by insinuating that the Bishop supported his condemnation and punishment of Miss Tobin. Theresa Corbett was not distracted by this additional threat of another male authority. Moreover, Theresa Corbett cracked open the hypocrisy of Father Casey's attack on a woman in his church by repeating with her own semantics and her own vernacular the gospel message. She explained her reasons for taking in Miss Tobin as follows:

> Mind you, Father Casey, I will not close my door to a poor unfortunate woman who has no home and no one to turn to. She may be a bit odd but she has never harmed a soul in her life. I don't have much, God knows, but what I have Miss Tobin is welcome to for as long as she needs it. I have an unfortunate child of my own, Father Casey, and I hope that no door will be closed to him after I'm gone from this world, or any of my children for that matter. (D. Corbett 21)

She could have used scripture to make her point. For example, in homage to the priest who invoked the Hebrew Bible for the women's-

only sermon, Theresa could have quoted Exodus 23.9: "Do not mistreat or oppress the stranger; you know how it feels to be a stranger because you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (New International Version). Or, from the Christian scriptures, Luke 6.31: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" and Hebrews 13.2: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it" (New International Version). This last verse is reiterated in the Celtic Rune of Hospitality, perhaps culturally familiar given Theresa Corbett's Irish heritage: "oft oft oft goes the Christ in the stranger's disguise.

Yet instead of relying on patriarchal argument by scripture, Theresa recontextualizes her message with "Radiant" words. All of these scriptures invoke the deity of the stranger, the neighbor, the human who lives in one's community. All of these scriptures point to the attitude of service and inclusion that grounds both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament. Theresa defends her understanding of the moral ethic on a personal level by invoking her own economic disadvantage and by protecting her own children, particularly Joe. Mary Daly would have various names for Theresa Corbett: a Wild Woman, a Graceful Amazon, a Crone, a Fury, a Hag. These terms would not be in Doris's story, for the eleven-year-old Doris hadn't encountered Mary Daly yet, but she sees in her grandmother a trait that acknowledges the beginnings of an understanding of what radical feminism looks like. Her grandmother, she wrote was "some strong" (D. Corbett 20).

Theresa Corbett is not the only woman in this story who had the courage to stand up to patriarchy. Doris does not record any words of Miss Tobin; thus, her resistance is not verbal, but performative. This may be surprising, since Miss Tobin, physically, doesn't seem to exude strength. She is described by Doris as old and frail. Her hands were pale and delicate with "fingernails clean and manicured" (D. Corbett 4). She ate her meals "delicately and slowly" (D. Corbett 4). She was ageless; to the children she was "older than God" (D. Corbett 5). She was tall, thin, and slightly bent from her work of polishing the altar rail for 30 years. Her face was pale and lined. Her hair was sandy with gray and she pulled it back in a bun. She dressed "like a nun without her habit" (D. Corbett 5). Some in the community thought that she

wasn't "right in the head" (D. Corbett 6) but mostly people ignored her eccentricities. Most important, Miss Tobin was unmarried. Although her first name was known (Alice), she was always referred to by a moniker that pointed to her marital status. She was a spinster.

In her book *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly devotes a lengthy discussion to reinventing a new understanding of women who fit this description of the spinster. Daly suggests that society has appropriated both a contemptuous and pitying attitude towards women who are unmarried. Society uses the term spinster as "a powerful weapon of intimidation and deception, driving women in the 'respectable' alternative of marriage, forcing them to believe, against all evidence to the contrary, that wedlock will be salvation from a fate worse than death, that it will inevitably mean fulfillment" (393). Daly traces the negative connotations in Merriam-Webster in which the term "spinster" implies an older unmarried woman who behaves like an "old-maid" and who is "a prim nervous person who frets over inconsequential details" (393). Daly counters this negative portrayal by pointing out that, "[i]n essence, the Spinster is a witch. She is derided because she is free and therefore feared" (394). In order to combat the passive identity imposed by patriarchy, the spinster literally spins "ideas about such interconnected symbols as the maze, the labyrinth, the spiral, the hole as mystic center, and the Soul Journey itself" (400). Daly argues that the spinster is not trapped in these symbols; instead, the spinster uses integrity to formulate "adaptability, flexibility, and inventiveness. This Spinning movement is living 'on the boundary'" (394).

If Theresa Corbett was a Wild Woman, Miss Tobin was a "Spinster," in Daly's critical sense of the term. The violence which Father Casey used to ban Miss Tobin from the community suggests that he feared her. Her banishment, like that of Eve, was meant to intimidate and control her. In response to Father Casey's action and to escape the trap that he set for her, Miss Tobin exemplifies adaptability, flexibility and inventiveness. First, she survived for months as a homeless woman, and, when she was given shelter, was able to sustain that protection for two years. More significantly, Miss Tobin inventively defied the priest's banishment from worship. After the confrontation of Theresa and Father Casey, Father Casey unrelentingly locked the

doors of the church against Miss Tobin. Miss Tobin then decided to enter the building at off hours. Initially, this tactic worked, but once she was discovered, she was physically removed by Father Casey. However, she persisted. In order to participate in the liturgy of the mass, Miss Tobin, in the middle of winter, went outside to the "glass window that faced the right side of the altar (D. Corbett 24). Doris remembers how the congregation

> watched you stand there for a few minutes—then you disappeared and a few minutes later you came back with a wooden box. As you stood on the box in clearer view of the altar, Father Casey in his vestments came from the sacristy to say mass. Then you were there, prayer book and rosary in your hands, saying the responses of the mass at the appropriate times, and it was freezing cold out. (D. Corbett 24)

Daly understands men like Father Casey and in the following quote, she anticipates Father Casey's next move: "Naturally/unnaturally the bullies do not understand such Wild Female power, but they do have a cowards' capacity to sense danger and stop at nothing to nip it in the bud. . . . Mindlessly they place innumerable obstacles in the way of Wayward Women" (*Amazon Grace* 15). Father Casey's response to Miss Tobin's peering through the window was to cover the two bottom panes of glass in thick white paint. However, this doesn't stop Miss Tobin.[6] Doris remembers that "now only your shadow was visible—you with your coats and Garbo-style hat, newspapers over your head on rainy or snowy days. You looked like a giant bird, perched outside the window, fluttering every now and then to shake the rain and snow from your shoulder" (D. Corbett 24).[7] Miss Tobin embodies the spinster who lives on the boundary.

[6]In August, 2019, Marie Corbett met an older gentleman in the Conception Harbour who remembered Miss Tobin scratching the frost from the outside window to peer into the church.

[7]In a discussion of the Sphinx, Daly notes that birds are connected with divinity. (*Quintessence* 185).

There is a third woman in this story, young during the events, and grown to her mid-fifties when she is able to reflect on the impact that the "Wild Woman" and the "Spinster" had on her life. Doris Corbett doesn't shy from revealing her child-like naivety and ignorance, demonstrated by her sometimes overly dramatic reactions as she watched her grandmother rebel against the priest. When Miss Tobin sat at the table for the first meal, Doris "thought I was going to die" (D. Corbett 4). When her grandmother invited Miss Tobin to stay at the house, Doris thinks "It's going to be some hard time for us now when Father Casey finds out that herself is here" (D. Corbett 5). As a young schoolgirl, Doris and her friends treated Miss Tobin cruelly: "[W]e were terrified of you and we giggled and made fun whenever we thought we were a safe distance from you" (D. Corbett 5–6). Doris writes that when Miss Tobin arrived, Doris knew "there would be hell to pay and everything would change because Mom never shut you out, no matter what the consequences. Now that Mom had given you shelter in her home, she had signed a social death certificate in the Harbour, taking Len, Joe, and me with her" (D. Corbett 14). Doris remembers that in school, she was no longer called upon to do things: "Every day I waited for the axe to fall. Every day I visualized blows to my head" (D. Corbett 14).

The adult Doris has also learned the power of forgiveness. Despite her fears and rejection of Miss Tobin, Doris confesses that having Miss Tobin in the house was comforting because her presence guaranteed that "someone was always home" (D. Corbett 27). The adult Doris seems to come to a point of reconciliation about Father Casey, who, in later years, helped Doris obtain a teaching job. Doris also describes a moment in her life when she considered joining the Sisters of Mercy. However, Doris's mother was not married and thus Doris's status was "illegitimate"; therefore she was not eligible. Father Casey pleaded her case, unsuccessfully. Doris writes that "Father Casey and I became friends in a way" (D. Corbett 29–30). This adult Doris is a far cry from the fearful, intimidated, and naïve eleven-year-old child who was not ready to acknowledge the moral influence of a Wild Woman and Spinster in her early life. But her growth is made clear at the end of her memoir; Doris was embarking to Central America

and asked for the blessing of her grandmother and Miss Tobin to watch over her as she set out on this journey.

It might be easy to classify this memoir as a bildungsroman; however, that the story is not fictional provides a significance beyond the usual coming-of-age story. Marie Corbett writes the following in her Forward to her cousin's memoir:

> A lifelong student and teacher of history, Doris called herself, not 'historian,' but 'memorizer,' a person who remembers and passes on the elemental experiences of women. Doris taught me that we must pass down our stories. Too little history is about the reality of women's lives; too much of "women's stuff" has been discarded.

Recording the events that happened is important; placing that recording in the hands of women is even more important. Mary Daly identifies serious ramifications of what happens when history is written by only men:

> Patriarchal men have done everything they could to stop women from this Re-membering. They are doing this today—by deadening and killing off Women's Studies, by erasing Feminist books, i.e. making them inaccessible, putting them out of print, keeping them out of libraries, forcing women's bookstores out of business. (*Quintessence* 4–5)

Daly, in a later book, believes that when women face the restrictions and punishments of a patriarchy that limits women's voices, there is a resurgence that can only come from women who are "inspired by our inherited memories," noting, "[w]omen who have suffered losses which are penalties for not selling out can emerge as Memory-bearers of great creative and magnetic power" (*Amazon Grace* 5). As a "memory-bearer," Doris Corbett remembers and writes a memoir devoted to recording and passing on the story of her grandmother and Miss Tobin. They are Daly's "women who have suffered losses," who, in Doris' memory, elicit power.

Marie Corbett specifically recalls that Doris called herself a "memorizer." However, the name does not come from Mary Daly. In a recording, Doris Corbett identifies where she found this assignation:

> I have a name that I always like to pass on. I'm a memorizer now. I used to be an historian and then a feminist historian and now I'm a memorizer. It comes from a book, perhaps one of the most important books ever written, called *Daughters of Copper Woman* by Anne Cameron . . . about a secret society of women living on Vancouver Island. One of the characters is Granny, and she calls herself a memorizer, one who passes along ancient stories. ("Remembering Doris")

One can understand why Doris believed that Cameron's book was among the most important books ever written; Anne Cameron created a fictional retelling of Northwest Canadian native myths that pass on the legacy of women's social and spiritual power. Like Granny, Doris Corbett, also a memorizer, has crafted a retelling of a memory that exhibits how womanly ways manifest a powerful response to patriarchal rule.

Forty Years Late is, at first glance, a simple story, set in a tiny outport, spanning a plot line that is short in its duration and involving every-day, flawed, common people. I believe the memoir deserves a second glance and in doing so that the reader will be awakened to a radical, unrelenting, and focused understanding of how human beings are called to respect each other. The ability of these women to defy authority, even in one small town in Newfoundland, is life-changingly powerful: "Effecting changes in small places—seemingly small changes—is ineffably important, for this enables us to work with the flow within that small system and thus have impact elsewhere. Such changes create large systems of change because they participate in an unbroken wholeness" (Daly, *Amazing Grace* 6).

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Complacency Fugue

It's harder now to drink the afternoon
Away, embalconied with cans of beer,
Knowing how soon
Everything here will likely not be here,
Whether by virtue of some vital lack
Of will—cars? plastics? radiation?—
Or from convulsions in a war-crazed nation
Happy to launch its nuclear attack.

All the more reason to be grateful now
For all the sane times and amenities
That still allow
One peace: the quiet, cold beers, and this breeze
That rakes the palm tree's bedhead and revives
Even a heat-wrung lout like me.
I know: Earth's burning. But I've come to see
How badly people want to live their lives

Well while not knowing everything they need
To do—which bags to use, which batteries,
Which blogs to read—
Which might be why I'm looking at my trees,
These Florida palms that spread both brown and green
Branches, both burgeoning and dying
At once, as emblems for the lives we're trying
To live not knowing half of what they mean.

And even though tomorrow will require
More concentrated work, more careful thinking,
I can admire
The afterbite of bright beers I've been drinking,
This breeze that drifts with afterthoughts and laughter,
The afterlight late afternoon
Lofts skyward like a salvaged wreck's doubloon,
As long as there will still be time here, after.

–Stephen Kampa

When the Shoah Becomes the Sacred[1]

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Before he was executed in 135 CE by the Romans during the disorder brought about by the Bar Kokhka revolt, Rabbi Akiva observed that "thou shalt love the Lord God with all thy soul, which means even at the moment that He taketh away thy soul" (Steinberg 65). Historical sources give conflicting accounts of his involvement in the revolt. Some suggest that Rabbi Akiva believed Bar Kohba to have been the Messiah. That is, he thought the perfection of this world was at hand. If so, his belief was misguided. Most agree that he died because he refused to surrender teaching the Torah and that he likely was flayed to death. His life, we might say, was taken from him by history. Had the revolt not occurred, he perhaps would have lived his natural span. Whether the Rabbi encouraged the revolt matters less perhaps than his belief that if history took his life it was only because that life was given to him by God. Upon his death, he is said to have died while reciting the Shema with its proclamation that God is one. As Milton Steinberg explains, the Shema insists that "reality is an

[1]Critical review of Aarons, Victoria and Lassner, Phyllis, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 840 pp. $219.99 hardback.

order" and "humans are a unity, not a hodge-podge" so therefore "a universal law of righteousness holds sway over us, transcending borders and class-lines (43). Rabbi Akiva's death was an affirmation of belief and God's love. He is said to have extended the saying of the final word, "Echad" (One) until it coincided with his expiration. In *Souls on Fire*, Elie Wiesel speaks of Hasidim during the Holocaust celebrating life inside the camps, how "startled Germans whispered to each other of Jews dancing in the cattle cars rolling toward Birkenau: Hasidim ushering in Simhat Torah." He also mentions "those who in "Block 57 at Auschwitz tried to get me to join their fervent singing." In place of the Messiah's arrival there was only God's silence. Wiesel asks if such acts were miracles that failed and answers "perhaps" (38). Rabbi Akiva's beautiful story is not yet the story of the six million.

The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture is not Talmudic commentary, but as an engagement with perhaps the most unforgettable event in Jewish history since Sinai it is a remarkable document that at times brings to mind rabbinic commentary. Containing a wealth of thought-provoking analyses situated within multi-generational and cross-continental responses to the Holocaust, the volume offers multiple starting points for considering the stupendous amount of art, cultural commentary, and philosophy that been generated since the Soviet soldier Vasily Grossman came upon a terrifying gathering at Treblinka and wrote likely the first full eyewitness account of survivors of one of Hitler's death camps. The monumental work provides more questions than answers as it tries to come to terms not so much with the Holocaust, but how Jews continue to process and understand the Holocaust as Jews.

In Grossman's masterpiece, *Life and Fate*, a mother describes the dread of the German occupation of Berdichev, the German soldiers driving about shouting "*Juden Kaput*!," and undergoes a sort of reawakening. "I was reminded of what I'd forgotten during the years of the Soviet regime," she writes her son, "that I was a Jew" (280). As Alexis Pogoreslkin notes, upon confronting Shoah, the "self-consciously Russian" author experiences a similar awakening, going so far as to suggest, contrary to Stalinist propaganda, "that the Jewish population of the Soviet Union had been the Nazis' primary target" (268). Approximately half of the Nazis' murders of Jews occurred in Soviet controlled territory and involved mobile killing

units, not the crematoria of the camps. Arguably, historian Raul Hilberg's work confirms Grossman's charge and, if their war aim is defined by the destruction of European Jewry, one may almost argue that the Nazis won World War II.

Thus, when Grossmann comes upon Treblinka, he initiates a reckoning that history had already delayed and even tried to efface. This awful awakening, the beginning to Holocaust studies, happened in a place that disguised from observers the enormity of what had already happened, ashes mingling in the dirt and ditches where ashes weren't made and bodies not yet decomposed crowded beneath mounds of earth. When Grossman and the Soviet army liberated Treblinka, there was very little left for them to salvage. Yet, the rabbinic injunction that each life lost is also a world lost certainly applied. Though only a few remained, their survival meant that some worlds had not been lost. Yet, the monumental death that had already happened felt like the destruction of a universe. A chief strength of this volume is its received sense that we are no closer to understanding what happened at Treblinka and elsewhere than Grossmann was when he happened upon it. The abiding questions that emerge from its pages seem to be: what remains of what was destroyed? What if anything can be created from its ashes?

Around the same time of Grossman's discovery, Yehiel De-nur, an escaped prisoner from Auschwitz, lay dying in a British army hospital in Italy. Although born in 1909 in Sosnowiec, De-Nur no longer possessed his birth name and was in his mind the equivalent to being two years old. It was as if he had been erased when the Nazis had christened him Ka-tzetnik 135633 upon his rebirth as an inhabitant of what he called Planet Auschwitz. As David Patterson relates in his extraordinary chapter, De-nur, near death, he asked for pen and paper. He wished to bear witness to the ashes that had blown in the wind and in his nostrils during his time there. He could not avoid smelling them. They had become the air that he breathed—Holly Levitsky describes the similar feeling that Charlotte Delbo suffered and that she portrayed in her play, *Who Will Carry the Word?* "From her deepest sense of memory," Levitsky notes, Delbo "continues to smell the foul odor of the camp" (402). Levitsky is careful to distinguish this persistent sense of smell from the unifying, memory-recovering one Proust depicts through his *madeline*. For these survivors, the smell, like the memories, is constant.

The aura-aroma of their terrible past has become the atmosphere of their lives and this atmosphere has permeated, altered, and replaced whatever their lives were before it happened. Yet, there abides the perhaps Proustian sense to convey this experience—this wretched transformation into what seems a living death.

To convey their experience was for Delbo and De-Nur something like a compulsion or even a possession. Once it had taken them over, the problem became how to get it, whatever that it may said to be, out of the body and into the world. This reproduction or recycling of their experience cannot precisely be the replication of what happened to them—if only because that would repeat and extend the crimes that had been committed upon them. Yet, simply by telling what had happened, they were not removing their story from either their consciousness or their body's experience of what they had suffered and were suffering. For Delbo, a playwright, the need for telling, for representation, distanced her somewhat since she had to think about technical questions related to staging drama. That is, along with confronting the horror of her memories, she also had think of how to construct sets and arrange actors so that the audience shared some sense of what the survivor carried with her. For De-Nur, however, it seems almost as if the fires of the crematoria were within, still burning, and the stench of the molten ash was both choking him and keeping him alive. To choke was to breathe and to breathe was to write and his writing seemed literally to come from his choking breath.

So, as the Angel of Death hovered near, De-Nur wrote for two weeks and when he was finished he produced *Salamandra (Sunrise over Hell)*, possibly the first novel to bear witness to the Shoah. He put no name on his work because in an important sense he did not consider his work to be his own. When the person to whom he had entrusted his manuscript asked who he should say wrote it, De-Nur replied, "Who wrote it, you ask? They wrote it. Go on, put their name on it: Ka-tzetnik!" (617). As Patterson notes, this "was the name given to all the inhabitants of the concentrationary universe, the name of those whose voices went into this voice" (618). The sense given is that had he not written, he would have died in that British hospital in Italy. The living were made into the dead whose uncompleted lives lingered to keep De-Nur from joining them too precipitously. He lived, paradoxically, by and through the others' story of their

annihilation. But De-Nur did not become known like Elie Wiesel or Primo Levi. Patterson relates that the novel "could be found in every Israeli home," but no one including the publisher knew who its author was. His children read his works in high school without knowing their father had written them. In 1961, however, he testified in Jerusalem during the trial for Adolph Eichmann. He came as a onetime resident of what he called "the Planet Auschwitz." He had begged not to take the stand. What he had seen in his two years there, he could not relate. "I saw the starvation, the beatings, the humiliation, the smoke bellowing from the chimneys, but *that is not Auschwitz*. What Auschwitz is, I cannot say. Please do not ask me to testify!" (615).

But he does. And when he describes that "planet of ashes" that stands "in opposition to our planet earth, and influences it," he does not from his own will but because the dead allow or prompt him to speak. To speak of these things requires "a supernatural power" that derives from "the oath I swore to them there" (616). Like Levi, he did not experience the Lager as a punishment, since he was not there "doing time." It was as if the Jews had been put outside of time and into a landscape of being that was nothingness. As Patterson rightly notes, he lived "in an anti- space-time," an "anti-time in an anti-world that was devoid of humanity" (616). To communicate to those who were not present the meaning of this other world that had existed and continued to exist through him and the other survivors, his body, not his language, provided the only adequate response. He fainted on the stand. Silence—but whose silence? Is it from God or is it the dead at their most eloquent?

Patterson observes that throughout De-Nur's testimony he employs the locution, "I believe with perfect faith," or the Hebrew phrase *ani maamin b'emunah shlemah* which can be found in the Thirteen Principles of Faith located in Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah (616–17). The second principle is "God is one and unique" and brings us back to Rabbi Akiva's assertion of belief in the face of his death. The anti-time of the anti-world seems almost inconsistent with the assertion of the God that is one who held him with his last breath, as if the Nazis truly had created a universe alternative to God's Creation, where they fashioned Planet Auschwitz, and put the Jews in it. And if, as De-Nur suggests, this world still "influences" planet earth, though Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich, and Eichmann are gone,

then has this other world altered the meaning and fact of this world as it existed before Hitler and this anti-time-space is in a sense where Jews who live after the Holocaust live. Although Milton Steinberg speaks of the rabbinic epigram that acknowledges that "it is not in our power to explain either the tranquility of the wicked or the sufferings of the upright," the sufferings of the upright De-Nur multiplied six million times seems to challenge this ancient wisdom (55).

Such thinking inevitably leads to Wiesel's notion of God's silence, but, if possible, I would like to set aside discussions of God for a moment to raise again the question of representation that in a sense makes this book both possible and necessary. What makes De-Nur's experience so remarkable is the sense that he writes both from his will and against his will at the same time. Where Levi struggled with his sense that he could not represent the experience of the dead—indeed this struggle may have precipitated his presumed suicide—De Nur simply refuses authorship altogether. He writes because others speak through him. And there is the sense such a force drives both the essays in this volume as well as the works that have provoked these essays into being. The worlds Hitler ended with each destroyed Jewish life are being countered and restored insofar as possible by the work this book enacts. No act of remembrance, however, can restore each world that was destroyed with each Holocaust death because collectively they composed a sort of Jewish universe that seems, if not lost, then severely altered.

More than the seventy-five years after Grossmann came upon Treblinka, the facts cannot be confronted too many times. Yet, they remain beyond acceptance. Sarah Cushman notes that recent "scholars have mined the archives, witnesses, and landscapes of Eastern Europe to show that as many Jews were murdered at close range by mobile killing squads as were murdered in Nazi annihilation camps" (707). Consequently, historian Timothy Snyder has argued that our most eloquent accounts of the Holocaust misrepresent or distort our understanding of the Holocaust, since for so long our view has been shaped by the eloquent testimony of concentration camp Survivors (Bloodlands viii–ix). So much of Holocaust writing is concerned with the experience of being true to what happened, of putting the reader or viewer in the place where these horrors happened. What story can be told of people who were rounded up, given shovels to dig their own graves, and then shot and put into them? The answer is something like Jan

T. Gross's *Neighbors*. Despite what Jesus said, the dead cannot bury the dead. Silence here is more than a metaphor for God's absence. Silence is all that remains of such dead—the silence of the dead and the silence of the complicit who cannot acknowledge what everyone should know. The Jews of the Holocaust did not do this to themselves. And if God allowed it, He needed help. Many came forward, almost enough to get the job done. As Gross' work suggests, they have not lingered to bear witness to the lives they extinguished.

De-Nur's plight gets as close to the bottom of this question as possible. In a work of nonfiction, *Shivitti*, De-Nur describes writing his first novel as a vision-dream. Having written continuously for two weeks, he has no memory of writing. He knows only that he wrote until he noticed "the picture of Eliyah" across from him on the desk and he knew his task was complete—as if God had let him know. He also heard a cry from a child—"the cry of life" (619). One wants to think the cry from the child raises, as it were, the dry bones that enlivened Ezekiel's visions but it's the bones of the "consumed in the gullet of Auschwitz" that his writing tends (619). These bones remain dry. If one cannot say what Rabbi Akiva said, what can one say?

To this question, the diverse, often brilliant essays Aarons and Lassner have compiled offer no clear answer. While acknowledging Lillian Kremer's claim that "to bear witness" to "the twentieth century's horrendous history" would fulfill "an obligation inherent in the Jewish tradition of remembering and reiterating the historic narrative," they explicitly refuse to offer a unifying explanation (4). The question of history, its uses and its continuity, appears again and again but in this book the Holocaust as history means the history of the Survivors' history. In this context, Survivors means not only those killed in the Shoah but those descended from the Shoah seeking to understand what happened. That these witnesses after the fact cannot understand what happened is a given to which each essay almost helplessly returns. An emblematic example occurs in Tim Cole's "Photographing Survival: Survivor Photographs of, and at, Auschwitz." Cole describes survivors who have come back to the camps with cameras and their families. When Michael Zylrberberg returns to Auschwitz to say Kaddish for his murdered parents, he is startled that the crematorium is not as he remembered. The Germans had blown it up—as if to kill his parents again. Yet, he has returned less to find his parents than to assert his power

over what had happened. He prompts his daughter to take a picture of him alone walking through the gate—choosing "to cross the threshold of this place." Thus, when his daughter takes a picture of him exiting he is dramatizing "how I was a free man walking out of the concentration camp. This was a pilgrimage I always wanted to do and I did it this year" (641). He cannot bring his parents back, but this "pilgrimage" is arguably healing for him in a way that De-Nur's narratives are not. On the other hand, the cost of him enacting this freedom is to return to the scene of his trauma. Like De-Nur, he cannot quite leave.

But what of his daughter, the one taking the picture? How does she feel to have been put at the scene as a witness? And what story will she tell her children about that picture she has taken? Cole perhaps provides an answer in the story of a different picture from a different survivor. In 1996 Morris Pfeffer returned to Auschwitz with his son, having returned five years previously with his wife. Of the many pictures he took meant to provide "evidence of his authority as a survivor in and over this place," none may be more telling than the ones he took of his son. In one, his son sits "alone, in the punishment block." In another, he sits with his father in the barracks. According to the father, the son "was just shattered" and this shattering is evident in his face. The father, the one who endured the experience, is left expressing the incomprehension of his son. "What I see here I cannot believe. I cannot. . . . I cannot visualize. How did you people survive over here?" (639). Taken as a whole, the volume raises the question explicitly not to say what happened, although happened, happened, yet it cannot now or perhaps ever be precisely visualized. The achievement of the book, however, is not to mark such utterances as the inevitable outpouring from the survivor *but to show how this sense of aggrieved mystification and loss is passed down and taken up by the survivors' descendants*. In this remarkable exchange, it is not the past surviving in the future's memories of the past, that is, in the second, third or fourth generation after the Holocaust that compels our attention, but the future itself speaking through the mouth of a first-generation survivor.

Thus, this book neither attempts to dwell in the Holocaust's incomprehensibility or even tell us what the Holocaust means so much as to chart the Holocaust's afterlife in the minds and bodies of the Survivors and the Survivors' Survivors. To make this claim may seem to undermine the implied sacredness of the word "Survivor," or to extend its meaning to such an

extent as to make it an empty word, but, if anything, the work of the second and third generation has made surviving the Holocaust an ongoing project for subsequent generations. In this respect, arguably the key work discussed is the graphic novel, *Maus*. In an essay arguing that Samuel Beckett should be read as a Holocaust writer, Ira Nadel recalls a key scene from Spiegelman's novel. Addressing his patient's concern that he will never be able to tell the story of his father's survival from the concentration camp, the therapist Pavel assures Art that he need not think he can make sense of a genocide. "Every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness," Art replies, quoting Beckett. For a frame the therapist and patient sit in silence, as if to dramatize this point, whereupon Art breaks the silence, "On the other hand, he SAID it," to which Pavel replies, "maybe you can include it in your book" (700). Except for Cary Nelson's illuminating account of German anti-Semitic poetry in the 1930s, Rachel Brenner's essay on Polish Catholic writers' response to the Holocaust, and Wendy Adele-Marie's disturbing but essential writing on "Aryan Femininity" in the Third Reich, every essay in the volume enacts some version of Spiegelman's exchange with his therapist. The silence cannot be allowed to stand alone. If God did not speak, the righteous must—and here the righteous would include not only Jews but sympathetic fellow travelers like Beckett. That the author of *Waiting for Godot* can be seen also as a poet of the Shoah implies that the continuing crisis of the Holocaust cannot be contained by its original perpetrators and victims.

In presenting different depictions of the Holocaust's abiding afterlife, the *Handbook* reveals the multiple and often slippery ways those affected struggle to identify the meaning of one's relationship to its continuing presence. The book is at once uncertain about claiming a definitive relationship to its subject yet a compendium of brave efforts to address whatever force compelled first generation writers like De-Nur, Wiesel, and Levi to write. "How do we talk about the Holocaust now" is the book's opening sentence. More questions follow. How "is the Holocaust and its extended aftermath navigated, conveyed and kept alive in the collective consciousness of new generation of scholars?" What "is there left to say?" (1). "What is left unsaid?" "And how can we get it right?" (2). Asking what is left to say implies an exhaustion that the heft of the book denies. A logical extension to these questions might also be, how do we talk about the Holocaust

after Wiesel, after Levi, after Lanzman, after Spiegelman, after Safer Foer, after Jill Soloway's 2014 TV series, *Transparent*? Noting that "there is no guiding methodological or theoretical frame" uniting the volume," the editors agree with David Roskies' assertion that Holocaust literature "unfolds backward and forward" (3). We see this boomerang movement in the account of the photograph where the second-generation son sits where the father sits, devastation and loss on his face, as the father tells the interviewer the words his son spoke upon being put in the very spot his father occupied during the Shoah. By collectively mixing together first, second, and third generation responses to the catastrophe, the book takes the Holocaust as a giant fallen boulder in some unnamed road (though some may call this road "history") that we keep running up against, one that seems to roll with us as we push against it, a marker in the landscape rather like Wallace Stevens' anecdote of a jar that becomes the eye through which the world is seen. There is the assumption that the Holocaust has not yet become "past history" and an anxiety concerning how future writers will "engage with that history" and keep the memory from being truly past and thereby lost (2).

The question the book tacitly raises but never speaks is whether the rupture in history known as the Holocaust has diverted or even completely replaced the history that existed before the Holocaust. Addressing that question would require the editors were more precise concerning who constitutes the "we" of their opening sentences. If the "we" is humanity broadly conceived, the answer is one thing, and if the "we" is Jews the answer is likely quite different. Insofar as the Holocaust is an event in history, it likely marks the end to Western rationalism. It "demystified the notion of 'enlightenment,'" Heidi Flanzbaum argues, "revealing it to be a sham: Knowledge or scientific achievement plainly did not lead to a more civilized society" (796). Her conclusion echoes George Steiner's observation, "in the high places of literacy, of philosophy, of artistic expression became the setting for Belsen. . . . Barbarism prevailed on the very ground of Christian humanism, of Renaissance culture and classic rationalism" (329). On the other hand, Hitler was hardly an epigone of Christian humanism or Renaissance culture, but he did think Europe would be more civilized were it removed of every living Jew.

At the edges of these essays is Michael Rothberg's argument that the Holocaust should be understood in the context of other genocides. Putting forth the concept of "multidirectional memory," Rothberg suggests that

"memory is not the exclusive property of particular groups but rather emerges in a dynamic process of dialogue, contestation, and exchange that renders both memories and groups hybrid, open-ended, and subject to renegotiation" (227). Although many essays defer to Rothberg's thesis, the *Handbook*'s "generational" approach to Holocaust memory ultimately resists any notion that would separate the meaning of the Holocaust from Jewish history and memory. According to Aarons, third-generation Holocaust narratives involve "return journeys—both physical and imagined—to the sites of traumatic origin" and "reveal attempts to comprehend, give voice to, and demystify the 'unimaginable,' unpresentable fracture of the Holocaust" (121). Although these return journeys may involve learning something of their relatives' lives before the Nazis (or history) captured and destroyed them, the point generally is that this life was fractured by the Shoah and a reunion with that previous life cannot be imagined. Often finding the very site of their relative's death, they do not stand over their lost ones with Torah in hand. Rabbi Akiva's last breath does not merge with God but expels ash. One cannot even say they died as martyrs since the Holocaust Itself becomes their history—and the history of the descendant.

This realization the Holocaust creates a new tie while erasing older ones is arguably one of Hitler's most insidious achievements. History comes to seem static. The mourner is connected to the traumatic event through the death of their family members. Each person seeking the past has a specific relationship to the Event that destroyed their ancestors. The murdered paradoxically by their collective deaths were given a collective experience that denied and effaced the very community their history represented to that point. Grossman suggests that the Holocaust intensified his sense of his own identity as Jew and this may be the case for the second and third generation artists and cultural workers discussed here. Yet, if the Holocaust and not Judaic tradition is what binds them, then what future is there going forward except the perpetual invocation of the Holocaust as something that destroyed their ancestors yet now defines them as Jews? Second or third generation Holocaust sufferers may relate more to other second or third generation sufferers than they do to Jewish history and culture before the Holocaust. It may be that Rothberg's notion of a multidirectional memory is an attempt to reconceive of the Holocaust as something other

than Jewish cultural claustrophobia. For who wants their history to be a continual return to the location where one's ancestors were gassed or shot?

Thus, the editors invoke David Roskies and Naomi Dimant who suggest that "to tell one story well requires that one not try to tell every story" (2). In Chapter 30, Golan Moskowitz delineates the implications of this strategy by observing the distinction between Orthodox and non-Orthodox reactions to the Holocaust. In "the present historical moment," Moskowitz observes, "non-Orthodox American Jewishness is increasingly a function of individual narratives negotiated privately and often beyond the traditional institutions of synagogues, federations, or even endogamous marriages" (554). The survivors who return to Auschwitz with their cameras and their families to document and witness again their experience is a version of this claim, as are the Jewish families who arrange visits to Washington D. C. not just to see the American national monuments but also the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The history being confronted and enacted, whatever its presumed multidirectionality, arguably speaks specifically to a Jewish Diaspora where it becomes increasingly difficult for Jews to know themselves as Jews among and within other living Jews. In Chapter 13, A. A. Passmore quotes Aleida Assman's observation that after the war "the memory of the Holocaust was fragmented and dispersed." It "was confined to various groups of survivors and privatized within the families of the victims" so that "it took two decades before the event was identified by a name and a discourse evolved on the unprecedented magnitude of the trauma and crime" (219) In this context of cultural dissolution, Passmore discusses Mirna Funk's novel, *Winternahe*, wherein its protagonist drifts from Berlin to Israel in back uncertain where to live in part because the "Jews in Germany live in a past that is still present while non-Jewish Germans are increasingly contains this history to the past" (225). Passmore suggests that Lola leaves Germany because she can't live there as a Jewish woman. Yet, wherever she is, an abiding sense of discomfort, or anxiety, from the Holocaust impinges upon her identity. The character seems very alone in her Jewishness, cut-off from and caught within a history that gives her no communal release or comfort.

Moskowitz cites a 2001 study documenting American third-generation responses to the Holocaust. Noting that almost all of the respondents "have been touched by the Holocaust directly or indirectly," still many

"see no specifically Jewish meaning for the event, no significance to their lives as Jews, and no lessons for Jewish history" (555). In a volume where nearly every essay worries about the Holocaust being forgotten, this is a jarring claim. Indeed, if one were to take this book as representative of Jewish American experience today, one would assume that the Holocaust occupies a central place of self-identifying Jews more identifiable than Torah. Moskowitz, however, suggests otherwise. She identifies third-generation American Jews who experience the Holocaust as a living event with the precepts that intersect with queer theory in that both groups must continually deal with "legacies of emotional removal, stigma, and alienation." Moskowitz interviews "Alan," for instance, who, though born decades after the Holocaust, cannot quit asking himself whether upon arrival at the camps he would have been sent immediately to the gas chambers. He suspects that he would have been due to his "feminine quality" (562). For Alan, whose grandfather was a Survivor, there is no family story that normalizes the sense of personal estrangement he experiences on account of his history. Moskowitz contrasts Alan's "embodied difference" with the experience of "Gabe," a third generation Jew who identifies more as an American than as Jew precisely because he understands America to have accepted his family despite their history. Gabe recalls the stance of writer Philip Roth, who, in *The Ghost Writer*, wrote about Anne Frank to suggest that her history as a Jew could never be aligned with his more fortunate history as a Jew who was also an American. In either case, Moskowitz suggests that for grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, family narratives, whether secret or shared, "converge with the self-oriented trend in contemporary Jewish life among adults in their twenties and thirties who define their Jewish identities by what is *personally meaningful*" rather than a shared commitment to Judaism or Jewish history (570; emphasis added).

The orientation of Elie Wiesel or Primo Levi, on the other hand, was not characterized by the search for what is personally meaningful. When Wiesel wrote Night, he put the Holocaust into a theological context. As Alan Berger notes, Wiesel's "literary, religious, and existential universe revolve around the deity" (15). Berger contrasts Wiesel with the Talmudic heretic Elisha ben Abuyah who witnessed the death of innocents and proclaimed "there is neither judge nor judgement" (15). One might take from this comparison that confronting the evil of the world absent the observed

mercy of God is merely an old and perhaps insoluble problem—especially when Wiesel asks, in Berger's words, "what choice does a believer have when Sinai is confronted by Auschwitz?" (15). Like Job, Wiesel's personal desolation is also communal. He survived while his family did not—and for Wiesel family includes all the Jews killed in the Shoah. Wiesel's personal predicament is also a communal predicament. He has questions for God and unlike Job, who also had questions, God does not obviously appear to Wiesel to answer them. Berger observes that in Hebrew "the word for question is *sh'elah* which itself contains the word for God (*El*)" (17). In the example above, Alan struggles not with God but with an upbringing that has given him limited emotional sustenance. If one were to imagine him as Wiesel's grandchild, one might say that his legacy derives in part from Wiesel's struggle to find in his questions an answer that relieves him from the questions he is compelled to keep asking. "I will never cease to rebel," Wiesel affirms, against those who committed or permitted Auschwitz, including God" (17). Paradoxically, Wiesel's sense of rebellion derives from his frustrated belief in God. Alan, however, looks to the Holocaust and the suffering of his grandfather to make himself feel better about his own sense of being outcast.

This position is far from Job and ultimately puts the burden to explain what happened not on God but on Wiesel, an unbearable burden. To be clear, Wiesel does not try to explain the Holocaust—that is beyond his comprehension. He tries to explain God, whom, as young person, he thought he knew. Consequently, as Berger argues, Wiesel "re-views all of the Jewish history in light of the Holocaust, asking if classical claims remain valid" (18). Unable to surrender the notion that God should have intervened, fearful that even God was "powerless to stop the Shoah," Wiesel, according to Berger, was left to consider the prospect that "the deity Himself was among the Holocaust's victims" (19–20). By the time of his work, *Twilight*, Wiesel, paradoxically, has made the creator of the universe [one] who suffers along with the Jewish people" (21). In this formulation, Alan would have no Jewish God to turn to except whatever can be made out of the ruins left by the Holocaust.

Such a formulation, arguably, preserves classical theological formulations in that God arguably continues to live through Wiesel's formulation of him as One who lives on in memory along with the six million. This position is similar to Abraham's Heschel's argument that the story of the Ju-

daic tradition is God in search of man, rather than the reverse.[2] Yet, the family Holocaust narrative that Moskowitz finds does not obviously concern itself either with God's presence or absence. The Holocaust is more real or present than God who seems almost irrelevant, an anachronism, arguably, to the non-Orthodox Jews whose perspectives this volume for the most part reproduces. Megan Reynold's chapter on Chaim Grade's "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner" clarifies the stakes of this divide. Grade's story stands out because unlike the works discussed in the other chapters, it confronts a Judaic tradition as it existed before the Holocaust in order to explore and "reinforce a sense of identity after the Holocaust" (147). Two friends, beginning in 1937 in Bialystock and ending in 1948 in Paris, have a continuing dialogue, a quarrel really, that initially concerns why one of them, Hersh, remained a devoted member of his Yeshiva, and the other friend, Chaim, did not. Chaim leaves before the war but once the war comes and Hersh has suffered time in a camp at Latvia, he remains faithful. He becomes a head of a Yeshiva in Germany and also survives a concentration camp. As Reynolds points out, the crux of the story is how each character responds to the Holocaust. Chaim, like Wiesel, asks his friend how he can believe in God after surviving. "Reb Hersh, you were saved. But how about the rest?" (157) Reynolds argues that Chaim's questioning of his friend concerns his own struggles to identify as a Jew when he can no longer believe in his friend's God. Hersh tells Chaim that they are not only "face to face with the destruction of the Community of Israel" but also that Chaim is faced with "the destruction of your faith in the world" (158). Hersh, by contrast, sees in his friend's unquestioning faith a compliance with the Holocaust and a failure to respond to the ongoing trauma of Jews suffering from its legacy. By Reynold's reading, Chaim's engagement with and critique of Hersh allows him "to reorient" his Jewish identity after the Holocaust and "makes an argument for ethical engagement with the Holocaust itself" (161).

That phrase captures precisely also the achievement of this book, which begins with an essay on Elie Wiesel and ends with Flanzbaum's essay equating the Holocaust with the end of history and the rise of poststructuralism. Flanzbaum suggests that where scholars once "sought to label the Holocaust"

[2]See Heschel, *God in Search of Man*.

as "unique, incomparable, and unrepresentable," they have come to realize that for the Holocaust "to remain a vital field of study, the event will have to take its place in the global landscape of persecutions and genocides" (789). Thus, she sees the Holocaust and trauma studies as being "symptomatic of the *postmodern* condition," which includes a skepticism about language and "a feeling of powerlessness in the face of an impersonal, totalizing force" (794). By this logic, the Nazi death camps and the birth of poststructuralism are inextricably linked" and the "Holocaust" the death knell not only for six millions Jews but human history as it has been conceived since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Derrida's notion of deconstruction was, she says, "avowedly antitotalitarian" keyed to the "abyss of uncertainty" the Holocaust revealed (796, 798). Deconstruction, therefore, is not "an amoral exercise in sophistry" but an attempt to deal with the recognition that no truth is or ever can be final, not even, apparently, the fact of the Holocaust. Or, as Emerson said, things are in the saddle and they ride us.

Flanzbaum challenges the state of Holocaust Studies in the United States for being insular. American scholars have worried about how best to represent what happened, but "very little energy has been devoted to the question of what that might mean for human history" (798). This raises again the question concerning the distinction, if any, between human history and Jewish history, and, ultimately, what we mean by history. It was Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi who argued that it was "ancient Israel that first assigned a decisive significance to history and thus forged a new worldview whose essential premises were appropriated by Christianity and Islam" (8). "There are no truths outside the Gates of Eden," Bob Dylan sings, locating perhaps the place where history begins. But how to divide your history from my history? Are we all living the same story? I doubt few if any reading this essay would say that "we" are.

If the Holocaust is something that happened, like the Cambodian genocide or the Turks genocide of the Armenians is something that happened, then it is hard to say what its meaning is other than that technology allows certain humans to kill large groups of other humans, who may or may not be identified by their ethnicity or religion. But history is also something humans try to shape by using history to tell stories and thereby create community through the sharing of these stories. And if so, what stories can we tell about genocide, a question particularly urgent as we come to grips with

the possibility that climate change will destroy all of humanity. In *Fate and Destiny*, Rabbi Soloveitchik's responds to the Holocaust by drawing on the classic Judaic distinction between fate and destiny. Fate everyone suffers. You cannot choose it. Fate is compulsion since "against your will you live out your life" the Mishna says (2). The "I of fate" is an object. One who understands their life to be fated exists in an external dynamic where "self-awareness" cannot exist. Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that Judaism understands evil to be an undeniable fact. It exists, Hitler exists. The Holocaust, in other words, feels like fate. Those shot and gassed and burned could fight their fate, but not change it. In our fate-laden existence, people seek in vain to solve evil "within the framework of speculative thought" (4). Derrida can neither argue the Holocaust away nor invent a frame of reference that would exclude its happening again.

Destiny, on the other hand, is "an active mode of existence." You're not an object. You confront the environment into which you are thrown. "Against your will you are born and against your will you will die, but you live of your own free will" (6). One's task—for Soloveitchik, this would define the Jews' historic task—is to transform fate into destiny, that is, from passive to active. Regarding the history of Israel, Soloveitchik distinguishes between the first covenant, or the covenant of fate, and the second covenant, or the covenant of destiny. The covenant of fate occurred when God subjected the fate of the individual Jew to a "national, fate-ridden, reality" (43). "The God of the Hebrews does not wait for man to search for Him" but "imposes His rule over man against his will" (45). In this sense, the Jew "serves the God of the Hebrews against his will" (45). The benefits of this arrangement are that Jews experience a shared sense of fate—and suffering—that creates community. Thus, "the actions of the individual are charged to the account of the community" (52). Ironically, the awareness that this fate was imposed upon Israel against their will is the source of Jewish unity.

Thus, if the covenant in Egypt was made against the Israelites' will, then the second covenant at Sinai was different because it was presented as a choice. By accepting the covenant offered at Sinai, Solveitchik says the Jews committed themselves to "a goal beyond the reach of human fate" (55). Against a life of fate determined by "sheer facticity" and "isolation," the Jews would imitate the Creator "through an act of self-transcendence"

and the "motivating force" that comes from "the experience of the unity of a people betrothed to the one true God." Though one may argue that a type of compulsion is implicit in this arrangement, the answer is that acts of love and kindness toward each other constitute a resistance to the mercilessness of mere fate.

Aarons and Lassner correctly state that "there is no guiding methodological or theoretical frame" to this book but Berger's chapter on Wiesel, Patterson's on Yehiel De-nur, Reynolds' on Chaim Grade, and even Flanzbaum's end of history argument suggest otherwise. Each of these essays performs a coming to terms with history that remain deeply involved with an idea of Jewish history where the writer fears that Jewish history may be on the verge of being lost in the near future. Keeping Rabbi Solveitchik's understanding of fate and destiny in mind, *The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture* arguably enacts a process where the Holocaust has flipped the order of the covenants and replaced destiny with fate, which means the upcoming time has never felt more uncertain for the continuation of Jewish history. In this respect, Phyllis Lassner's essay captures the uneasy yet expectant relationship with the future these writers collectively probe. Discussing the plight of Srulik in Pepe Danquart's film, *Run Boy Run*, Lassner points to an interlacing of the ancient Jewish past and the genocidal present." The protagonist's "greatest challenge" is "hiding his Jewish identity" (in order to survive) and then "reclaiming it" (134). Contrasting this film with Rachel Seiffert's *A Boy in Winter* where the protagonists decide they need not guess what Jewish future awaits them and their descendants, Lassner says that both works revise "the idea of 'communal renewal' by questioning whether and how the 'desire for rebirth' can be an imaginative possibility after genocide has destroyed the myth of 'return to the kind of golden age that nostalgia can allow us to believe in" (142–43). Wiesel does not offer nostalgia; Grade's Chaim, however, sees Rabbi Hersh's faith as a kind of nostalgia; Flanzbaum invites us to see the Holocaust as the inevitable end to the West's ideal of history as a progressive force leading to more just communities. On this view, the world is simply war.

I say "arguably" above because each chapter brims with compassion and love for those who have suffered. Even those writers who insist on understanding the Holocaust as multidirectional and in conversation with the genocide of other peoples, write from a position of solidarity with those

whom history has wronged. Moskowitz is right to note that the American experience of the Holocaust is largely through a familial lens—*Maus* is the ur-text for this view. Still, taking the essays collected here as a whole, that family is Jewish precisely in the covenant of fate sense described by Solveitchik. In other words, a communal history is implied even if none of the writers know quite how to act on that communal awareness. It may be that somehow between the lines of this book Rabbi Akiva's last breath still breathes. I understand the work of Aarons and Lassner to compose a version of his last breath, an act of mercy in a world where it can often seem that none are expected or recognized.

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Mapping Futures: A Dialogue on Mormon Literary Studies

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John Bennion: Some writers hate their reviewers and critics. For example, Thomas Hardy famously argued with his critics and became so frustrated by their reception of his work that he stopped writing novels. However, most writers and readers see the value of good criticism. A good critic makes a record of their reading, not as the only possible or primary reading, but as a means of generating new readings. Roland Barthes suggests that one role of the reader is to perform a "writerly" reading of a writerly text, meaning that most good texts are not designed to produce a narrowly predictable response, as if a piece of literature is an industrial or commercial process (4). Since the Romantic period writers have enjoyed thinking about themselves as lonely geniuses, but the reality is that readers, writers, and critics are in a social environment and need each other; writers need critical readers as much as critics need writers. Neither could exist without the other. But before we dive in, perhaps some definitions are in order. What name do we choose for our subject?

Michael Austin: I like the original term "Mormon literature," which has the advantage of being already established in the existing scholarship (as modest as it is) as well as more descriptive than

other terms. The recent emphasis of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the correct use of its name has actually been a good thing for Mormon studies generally and Mormon literature specifically. It has allowed for the word "Mormon" to evolve a more general meaning that creates a useful distinction. A "Latter-day Saint" is a member of a specific institution with an address, a web site, a tax status, and so on. A "Mormon" is part of a much larger faith tradition that includes several Restoration denominations, a history, a heritage, a culture, and a literature. Most of the people who write Mormon literature—however we choose to define it—have at least a complicated relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many of them don't consider themselves members of any Church or organization, but they do claim a Mormon culture, spirituality, or aesthetic that sets them apart from other cultures, spiritualities, or aesthetics. Now that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has given up nearly all uses of the term "Mormon," it is there to be picked up and used in ways that do not denote a formal association with the Church.

JB: A good distinction. To represent the symbiotic relationship between critic as reader and writer as a different kind of reader, I propose the double helix as a model. The two strands work together and have numerous connections for cross communication. The image of a double helix also brings to mind a genetic blueprint for generation of a viable organism, in this case the creation of literature. We want to focus this conversation on the infrastructure that currently supports Mormon literary writing—primarily poetry, essays, fiction. We hope to offer a blueprint for possible futures that would result in an even stronger infrastructure.

MA: The question of "infrastructure" is very important. Literature has to have institutions behind it in order to exist. For Sophocles and Euripides to write great plays, there had to be a theatre complex in Athens and a religious festival—the Dionysia—that created a reason to write plays and brought an audience to see them. The great novels of the eighteenth century required several new physical industries—

printers, binders, booksellers—to create the physical books that people could read. But they also required an intellectual industry to circulate ideas through the culture that novelists could appropriate, extend on, and contribute to. The broad work of criticism, I think, is the creation of institutions that make literature possible by creating spaces in which it can appear and audiences who can appreciate it. "Institutions" can mean many different things, but includes journals, presses, libraries, courses, websites, blogs, anthologies, scholarly organizations, foundations, prizes—anything that helps to make literature a part of the culture. This is well beyond what most people understand by the word "criticism," but if we spend enough time with literary history, we see how often the people we call "critics" are also the ones who created the institutions that connected writers to an audience. This certainly holds true with Mormon literature. Eugene England, perhaps our most important literary critic, played an important role in creating both *Dialogue* and the *Association for Mormon Letters*, two institutions that have had an incalculable effect on the production of Mormon literature. And he created the first courses in Mormon literature in the BYU English Department. Literature simply cannot exist without some kind of institutional support, broadly defined.

JB: In your 2015 article, "The Brief History and Perpetually Exciting Future of Mormon Literary Studies," you compared Mormon literary studies to the disciplines of Mormon history and Mormon folklore:

> Despite its prominent start and considerable activity, the critical study of Mormon literature has not kept pace with its cousins, Mormon history and Mormon folklore, in either the quality or the quantity of its scholarly production. Unlike these other two disciplines, Mormon literary studies has had a difficult time breaking free from the largely internal audience for Mormon intellectual discourse, as represented by journals such as *Dialogue* and *BYU Studies* and by specialist and academic presses along the Wasatch Front. (50)

This prompts me to ask what scholars in Mormon folklore and history did to achieve wider prominence. I emailed two scholars, Jill Rudy, folklorist in the English Department at BYU, and Brian Cannon, historian at BYU and former president of the Mormon Historical Association, about the history of the growth of their disciplines.

Rudy wrote that Mormon folklore studies (dubbed "Latter-day lore" by Eric Eliason and Tom Mould) has been influenced by "a fascinating combination of insider and outsider interest." She names the 1940s study of Three Nephite stories by Hector Lee, Austin Fife, and Wayland Hand, which they published in "the main folklore journals in the US." In the 1950s, Richard Dorson, a nationally recognized folklorist with an interest in history and regional studies, included chapters on Mormon folklore in two books about American folklore. Rudy says, "that placed Mormons and their lore as an important folk group to consider." During this same time, Austin and Alta Fife published *Saints of Sage and Saddle*, a book that "kept Mormon folklore viable." Then Bert Wilson met Richard Dorson at Indiana University, intending to study Finnish language and literature, but Dorson helped him see the value in publishing on Mormon folklore. Rudy ends her email with the following:

> So, the big difference it seems in Mormon folklore, different from literary studies as Austin observes, is an ongoing relationship with scholarly peers and being part of academic conversations at the national level because of insiders and outsiders becoming fascinated with and researching LDS topics. Also, being able to maintain this work over generations of insiders and outsiders has been crucial and vital.

Her analysis describes a process of remarkable individual work grafting Mormon folklore into the trunk of American folklore. Cannon wrote that the success of Mormon history was due to strong historians whose reputation spread nationally (especially Leonard Arrington), the production of dissertations and later articles by those in the field (including non-Mormon scholars such as Larry Foster and Jan Shipps), private money that established chairs in Mormon history

or Mormon studies at several universities, and presses that published Mormon history (namely the University of Illinois Press and Oxford University Press). Cannon observes that "interest in Mormon history is driven partly by finances in an era when university presses have a hard time staying afloat; general LDS readers buy LDS history." Of Arrington, he writes: "My sense is that Leonard Arrington's role was pivotal. He was a superb networker with a keen mind, and he acquired a strong reputation in Western American history and American economic history that served the public image of Mormon history well when he became Church Historian. Arrington and his associates engaged emerging trends in historiography such as women's history and social history and applied them to Mormonism, which attracted professional interest and favorable attention." Again significant individual work was grafted into or adopted by the general field of American history.

MA: There are some larger structural issues at play here that have nothing to do with Mormon studies per se. Literary criticism about anything is harder to get published than either history or folklore. I have had three different academic presses in the last few years—all of whom regularly publish titles in Mormon history and Mormon studies generally—tell me that they would be very hesitant to take on a book of literary criticism. It just doesn't sell very well, and academic libraries that used to buy copies of anything that came from university presses are now so strapped for cash that they have to be more selective. This is becoming a crisis in English departments across the country that require books for tenure and promotion. The traditional academic publishers are not accepting enough literary criticism titles to meet the demand of the tenure industry. The underlying reason for this, I think, is that literary criticism is secondary in a way that both history and folklore are not. People who like history tend to buy and read history books, and people who are interested in folklore buy and read books about folklore. But people who like literature buy and read literature. They can go directly to the source without the academic or critical filter. So the market for books *about* literature is inherently smaller than it is for other subjects.

It is also true that both history and folklore are things that everybody expects Mormons to have. We don't have to prove that Mormons have history and that Mormon history is important to American history. Any historian who works in the 19th century knows this. And most people see Mormons as exactly the sort of weird, insular subculture that should have an interesting and abundant folklore. Mormon scholars in those areas don't have to persuade their disciplinary peers that the thing they want to write about exists. Mormon literature, on the other hand, is not a given. Most people who study literature don't know that anything of the sort exists, and the few people who have written about Mormon literature over the past fifty years or so have not really gotten past the stage of trying to define it. These factors have made it difficult for the academic study of Mormon literature to get off the ground. There is no scholarly infrastructure in place, and the barriers to creating that infrastructure, while not insuperable, are formidable. But there are several strong potential avenues for Mormon literary critics to pursue. For example, I have seen a lot of scholarly interest in literary readings of The Book of Mormon and other Latter-day Saint sacred texts. The recent collection *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon* (2019), edited by Jared Hickman and Elizabeth Fenton, is really groundbreaking here. Literary history and biography are also promising areas for research and publication. The University of Illinois Press has recently launched a brief biography series called "Mormon Lives," and the first two volumes in the series were about Vardis Fisher and Eugene England. So some paths are opening up for those who want to pursue them.

JB: Reviews generally state that *Americanist Approaches* is both readable and pertinent to the study of Nineteenth-century American literature. In a review for *Reading Religion*, a publication of the American Academy of Religion, Spencer Wells writes that the volume is a "welcome (and never sleep-inducing) addition to what is shaping up to be a minor renaissance of scholarship concerning the record that the self-proclaimed prophet Joseph Smith brought to light in 19th-century New York." He praises the editors for analyzing

the book as a "historical document that both sheds light upon and was influenced by the milieu of its era." Thus they sidestep the thrust of most previous scholarship—to "validate or invalidate the book's supposed 'antiquity.'" This editorial stance allows The Book of Mormon to be "fruitfully placed into conversation with the trends of its age." Benjamin Park adds that the volume was made possible by American literature scholars focusing on "marginalized or overlooked voices" rather than restricting themselves to the traditional canon.

Michael, your own review of this collection points out that it helps fill a void that has existed in general American literary studies concerning The Book of Mormon, which, you say, "remains a mystery to all but the most specialized, or the most Mormon, Americanist scholars" (150). I'm interested in your statement that the sacredness of the text for fifteen million people has made it difficult for both insider and outsider critics to decide whether to address the book as a nineteenth-century document or as revelation of an ancient text, but I'm also interested in the method the editors and writers used to structure both the volume itself and the critical arguments inside. You describe what I'll call bridge-building methodology. First the volume contains articles by writers from both traditional Mormon literary studies and general American studies. You also write that "[e]very selection in the volume opens or creates a set of potential connections between The Book of Mormon and the vast scholarly enterprise called 'American Studies'—and it delivers these connections to the rest of us in the Mormon Studies community with the not insignificant imprimatur of the Oxford University Press" (155). Both Rudy and Cannon said that making connections between local Mormon studies scholars and national scholars was one way pioneering folklorists and historians increased the breadth of their disciplines. I've pointed out in a couple of essays that Mormon critics have a history of lamenting the divide between insider and outsider views, so building bridges seems instrumental to the future of Mormon literary studies.

MA: I think that the two issues you mention—the difficulty of writing about texts that millions of people consider sacred, and the im-

portance of building bridges between Mormon and non-Mormon scholars—are different sides of the same issue. Scholarship requires a level of detachment that is very difficult to maintain when the subject of that scholarship is also a belief system that structures people's lives. When scholars debate questions like "was there really a Trojan War?" or "Did Shakespeare really write the plays of Shakespeare?" they may have to face professional consequences for their opinions, but they won't have to face personal consequences. They won't be ostracized from their religious community or beset with complaints that they are being insensitive to someone else's religion. Those sorts of analyses can be contained to the relatively inconsequential world of academia, where the battles may be fierce, but the stakes are low. But if someone sets out to write about The Book of Mormon, then even the most basic questions of textual analysis can have profound consequences. Who wrote it? When was it written? Who was the original audience? Is it a translation or was it written originally in English? It is almost unthinkable that someone could do a close reading of a text without saying anything about these questions, yet this is what almost every scholarly treatment of The Book of Mormon has to do. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a definite position on these questions. Latter-day Saint scholars who answer them differently risk their standing in the Church, and non-Mormon scholars risk appearing to be insensitive to a religious minority—which can also have serious professional consequences. At a different time, these considerations applied to scientists who studied evolution. Charles Darwin himself waited twenty years to publish *On the Origin of Species* because he understood that, once it was published, it would be devastating to the religious beliefs of his community.

With Mormon literature generally, the issues are similar. Most of the writers worth studying are going to be on the margins of Mormon culture, either just barely on the inside or all the way out. You can't always stick to the official version of Mormon history, culture, and practice and still write things that are beautiful and true. Latter-day Saint scholars who want to build bridges with non-Mormon literature scholars are going to have to focus on the marginal figures: Vardis Fisher, Maurine Whipple, and Virginia Sorensen in the 20th

century; Terry Tempest Williams, Brian Evanson, and Neal LaBute in our own day. Good scholarship about these figures can build bridges to the world of secular literary study, but these bridges will often come at the cost of alienating the more traditional Latter-day Saints at the center of the culture. Anyone who wants Mormon literary scholarship to succeed has to figure out, not only how to build bridges to non-Mormon scholars, but also how to build bridges from the margins of Mormonism back to the center.

JB: It might be useful to look at what has already been published to see what bridges have been at least partially constructed. I did a quick search of the MLA International Bibliography, using the terms "Mormon" and "literature." I found 118 sources, with 29 of those being about folklore and several being about history. Of the 88 remaining works most were tagged as American literature, with five being British and five being French. The distribution through time is one citation each in the 60s and 70s, 19 in the 80s, 17 in the 90s, 20 in the aughts, and 26 in the teens. I was surprised to discover that only 18 were in regional Mormon journals and presses. "Book of Mormon'" was in the titles of 26 studies. The second most popular subject was in the literary construction of Mormon identity as an aspect of national or regional (Western US) identity (14 studies). Gender studies was mentioned in nine articles, theater and film six, Mormonism and Judaism (representing the Holocaust) five. An obscure French novel *Le Parasite Mormon* was referenced four times. Other subjects mentioned were environment, gender, indigeneity, utopian movements, Mormonism and Milton, and childrens' literature. The Mormon writers mentioned were Phyllis Barber, Doug Thayer, Parley P. Pratt, Faun Brodie, Stephenie Meyer, Neil LaBute, Brian Evanson, Levi Peterson, Bernard DeVoto, and Vardis Fisher. What strategic work might we do we do to build on this small national tradition of Mormon literary studies?

MA: If we look at the way that other regional/subcultural literatures have developed—with writers and critics working in tandem to convince the rest of the world to pay attention to them—we can find a

lot of models for the kinds of things that Latter-day Saint scholars should be doing to develop a richer tradition of Mormon literature and literary criticism. There are a lot of these kinds of specialized literary movements. I worked with Appalachian literature when I was teaching in West Virginia. And I got a good dose of Jewish literature at BYU, when I worked as an assistant to Gloria Cronin on the *Saul Bellow Journal*. We can look at African-American literature, Chicano literature, LGBTQ+ literature, Catholic literature, and so on. The idea of a Mormon literature is not at all strange in the world of cultural studies. Just about everybody out there has a "literature of our own."

The first stage in creating a literary tradition is usually some kind of manifesto in which writers and critics boldly declare that X literature exists and deserves a place at the grown-ups' table. Perhaps the best example of this sort of thing is the 1930 book, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, in which twelve prominent Southern writers demanded their place in the canons of American literature. These were serious people—Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren among them. When they demanded that Southern literature and culture be taken seriously, people paid attention. Mormons are really good at writing manifestos about Mormon literature. We have produced dozens of them in the last fifty years or so. I wrote one myself when I was in graduate school ("The Function of Mormon Literary Criticism at the Present Time"). But at some point, we have to consider that the possibility of Mormon literature has been sufficiently manifestoed. We need to move on.

The next stage is usually canon building. Often, this is a work of reclamation, of going back into the past and discovering works of literature and cultural production that provide a tradition that critics can talk about and writers can build on. As Cole Porter says, "if you want a future, you've got to get a past." The canon-building stage of Mormon literature was in full swing in the 1960s and 1970s. That is when folks like Gene England, Richard Cracroft, Ed Geary, and Neal Lambert searched the archive for early Mormon literature and read through most of the important novels by and about Mormons from the 1930s on. This is when Vardis Fisher was held up as a potentially important Mormon writer, and when the early novels of Virginia

Sorensen became important again. And it is when Gene England pulled Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* out of obscurity and darkness to be republished in a new edition and taught in Mormon literature seminars.

But that work came to a screeching halt when the first generation of critics retired, and it is just now starting back up. But there is much more work to do here. We really don't have a recognized body of past work that has been accepted widely enough to constitute a tradition. That is a tremendous liability for writers who want and need a tradition to build from.

The third stage in the process is the creation of the institutions that we discussed earlier—journals, presses, endowed chairs, contests, grants, graduate seminars, and so on. These institutions are important for both critics and writers. We live in an era when a vanishingly small number of writers and poets can make a living with their craft, so institutional support is more critical than ever. Once again, the institution-building for Mormon literature happened in the 60s and 70s. That is when *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* were founded and when they published the bulk of the non-official Mormon fiction and poetry. It's when the Association for Mormon Letters was founded and when BYU started teaching Mormon literature courses and published the first anthology of Mormon literature. Those institutions have been vital, but they are now fifty years old and struggling to remain relevant in a world transformed by technology.

As for who is doing the heavy lifting now, I think that Scott Hales, James Goldberg, Eric Jeppson, and William Morris have done tremendous work in pioneering new spaces for Mormon literature to exist: the Motley Vision Web Site, the Mormon Lit Blitz, and the Peculiar Pages imprint. These are the new institutions that will take Mormon literature into the future. Terryl Givens, too, has been important for the larger project of Mormon cultural studies, and I expect both his and Kristine Haglund's recently released biographies of Eugene England to become important sources for students of the first generation of Mormon literary critics.

There are some people who have been working in the background for a long time to create and prop up the institutions that

make Mormon literature possible. Christopher Bigelow, the founder of Zarahemla Books, has produced a steady stream of Mormon fiction, drama, poetry, and nonfiction that has made some outstanding work available. Andrew Hall has done a log of very important background work that most people don't see. Andrew is the fiction review editor for *Dialogue* and the manager of the AML Website, "Dawning of a Brighter Day." He works in the background every year to coordinate the AML Awards, which have become an important yardstick for success in Mormon literature and criticism. He was also one of the editors of the recent volume of Maurine Whipple's lost writings published by BCC Press.

Another person who does a lot of crucial work in the background that very few people see is Ardis Parshall, who is simply the best archival researcher I have ever met. About five years ago, Ardis, who knew that I was working on Vardis Fisher and other "Lost Generation" writers, contacted me out of the blue and sent me a huge cache of letters between John D. Widstoe and Paul Bailey, a contemporary of Fisher's who wrote *For This My Glory*, *The Gay Saint*, and *For Time and All Eternity*. We ended up publishing an article about these letters in the *Journal of Mormon History*. Since then, Ardis has sent me hundreds of pages of correspondence involving 20th-century Mormon writers and their dealings with Church administration. I now know that many, many other people working on projects having to do with Mormon literature have received similar bounties from Ardis. This kind of largely unseen background work by people like Andrew and Ardis has kept the project of Mormon literature alive by propping up the institutions at times when they would have otherwise collapsed.

JB: I might add that Gideon Burton pioneered the Mormon Literature and Creative Arts Database, now adopted by the Lee Library at BYU. It's interesting that all of the pioneering critics you mentioned (England, Geary, Cracroft, Lambert) worked at BYU, publishing through regional journals and presses, but none of the new tribe—you, Hales, Goldberg, Jeppson, Bigelow, Hall, Parshall—are connected to the main university sponsored by the Church. In a couple

of ways this is a good thing: no successful literary movement could be based on a single institution and it may be that the bridge-building between fringe writers and critics and those fully in the Church is not feasible at BYU. Still, it could help to describe possible reasons that the blossoming of criticism and critical institutions from the 60s and 70s came to a "screeching halt."

During the 90s the English department at BYU experienced an intense version of the national culture wars that English departments across the country passed through. The English department history, written by Doug Thayer, states that many progressive faculty embraced "gender studies, new historicism, multi-cultural studies, and post-colonial studies," and other "isms," but some traditional "faculty were less enthusiastic about them, arguing that criticism had become more important than literature, the literature useful only as a means to discuss criticism." Not long after I came to the department in 1989, faculty meetings became battlefields. Thayer writes,

> A political polarity between liberals and conservatives had developed, focusing on feminism, abortion vs. pro-life, and cultural studies. The national press and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) had become involved in airing departmental problems. Even BYU's accrediting associations began to raise questions about department issues. Through correspondence, General Authorities told [department chair] Lambert to solve the department's glaring problems.

In the English department, two young feminist scholars, Gale Houston and Cecelia Koncher Farr, and one fiction writer, Brian Evanson, did not receive promotion to continuing status (BYU's version of tenure). The same thing happened to Tim Slover of the Theater and Media Arts department. A few others also left, including Eugene England, who was encouraged to retire, and Darrell Spencer, a winner of the Flannery O'Connor award in short fiction, who felt his position was no longer secure. These faculty members were replaced by young scholars who might gain national reputations and wouldn't focus on Mormon literary studies. Thayer writes that Lam-

bert "worked to emphasize scholarship by hiring only the most promising new faculty, particularly women at equal salaries with men." C. Jay Fox, who became chair after Lambert, continued the drive to hire new faculty who had already published in significant journals as doctoral students and who had a trajectory toward building a career through nationally significant scholarship. Thayer writes, "[m]oving toward more scholarly specialization during the previous twenty years, most faculty had begun routinely presenting papers at scholarly conferences, publishing articles and creative works in journals, and authoring an increasing number of books published by scholarly presses." Today faculty publish in major university presses and first-tier journals, but few publish critical articles in Mormon literary studies.

I recently reread Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's 2018 address to the Maxwell Institute, in which he considered an evaluation made by external reviewers a couple of years earlier. Elder Holland once served as president of BYU and is now an Apostle in the Church. In the address he said that the Institute, which published your 2015 essay on the future of Mormon literary studies, needed to appeal to two different audiences and write "solid, reputable scholarship intended as much for everyday, garden-variety Latter-day Saints who want their faith bolstered, at least as much as it might be intended for disinterested academic colleagues across the country whose stated purpose will never be to 'prove or disprove the truth claims of the Church'" (14). He further suggested that the Institute revise their idea of "Mormon studies," primarily because the national definition of a cultural studies program required bracketing of faith:

> [O]ver time I have come to see merit in a Latter-day Saint studies effort at BYU if you are willing to make it significantly different from the present national pattern. If you are willing to be truly unique, I can certainly endorse the idea that BYU should have a hand on any academic tiller dealing with the Church, becoming a place to which other such programs and chairs and lectureships might look for leadership. . . . But that leadership role cannot be successfully played in a traditional Mormon stud-

> ies framework. I say this because Mormon studies programs on other campuses are designed to be primarily academic ventures, not spiritual ones, which is perfectly understandable. Some of our member students enroll in those programs, and it may be a faith-promoting experience, but in great measure those endeavors are oriented toward an audience not of our faith and not for faith-building purposes. (15)

The Maxwell Institute is not all of BYU, but at the beginning of the essay, Elder Holland said similar principles might apply more broadly at BYU.

I find myself encouraged by his speech, because he articulates BYU's unique position very clearly—to produce work that doesn't exclude spirituality. I think of my own novels, stories, and essays and excluding spirituality would completely transform them. In "Like the Lilies" I describe how the continued esteem of my students helped me work through depression to where I could feel the effects of the atonement. In *Ezekiel's Third Wife*, Rachel prays and has a kind of vision of her husband as he tries to escape a posse led by her father. In an unpublished novel a desert woman feels the presence of the hundreds of people—Goshutes, Basque and Mexican herders, Mormon ranchers—who have lived in or migrated across the arid lands where she lives. I think the fictional genres of fantasy and magical realism, popular with Mormon writers, are an attempt to include spirituality in literature, which our secular American literary culture largely excludes from serious consideration. I include doubt and sexuality in my work which might mark my novels as being outside the kind of work Elder Holland advocates, but possibly not. I don't find any evidence in his address that he wants writers not to explore all of their experience, but he does suggest being wise about what writers include in any single work. Toward the end of the address, he says,

> By speaking to two audiences, I'm not suggesting you be two-faced. This is not a call to hypocrisy but precisely the opposite. When you're writing for the household of faith, you should

> never write anything that would give your doctoral adviser just cause to accuse you of dishonesty. Likewise, when you are writing for an academic journal, you should never write anything that would give your ministering companion just cause to accuse you of disloyalty. Your soul must be one—integrated, intact, and whole—even as your voice may speak in different languages to different audiences. (18)

I've written several essays that fit generally under the umbrella of criticism by attempting to address the dilemma for writers in the Church—how to write simultaneously for the two audiences described by Elder Holland. This is the division critics of Mormon literature have talked about since the beginning. In these essays I pushed the thesis that the problem lies in the reader—that most readers who are members of the Church want a certain kind of literature, one that never asks difficult questions. Richard Cracroft defended this kind of reader in his 1992 Address as president of the AML. I have been of the opinion that readers needed to be the kind described in Bruce Jorgensen's presidential address of the previous year. While that still seems true, I've more recently decided that there may not be that much writers can do directly to change the nature of readers. However, we could create literature and criticism, at least some of the time, that doesn't automatically exclude this kind of faithful reader. I've also claimed that the best writing by members of the Church is for national audiences, and this kind of writing does little to offend faithful insiders. Shakespeare wrote for several audiences and kept his career and his head, so maybe that's what writers who are employed by the Church need to do.

MA: I find it very disappointing that the BYU English department has so few people publishing about Mormon literature. This seems to me to be an outlier even for BYU. Off hand, I can think of maybe a dozen subfields of Mormon studies in which BYU faculty members are publishing regularly with the top presses and journals. History and folklore, of course, but also music, political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, theatre, family science, and religious studies. I can

understand why the English department might not want their faculty publishing in regional forums. But I can't imagine that any English department chair in the country would have a problem with a book published by Oxford or Johns Hopkins University Press, even if it were about something as disreputable as Mormon literature.

But it is not just BYU. Other than those doing literary approaches to The Book of Mormon, which I have already mentioned, there are not people working on Mormon literature in literature departments anywhere. For all of us, it is a side hustle. Andrew Hall probably comes closest, but he comes out of a history department. I am a full-time administrator, which gives me an institutional affiliation and access to a library, but anything I write about Mormon literature (or anything else) has to come on nights and weekends. It is not part of my job. This is a precarious position for a discipline to be in. Nobody has to produce Mormon literary scholarship to get tenure or keep a job. We can do it as long as nothing more pressing comes along, but more pressing things do come along. Even one or two positions devoted to Mormon literature at universities somewhere in the world would do wonders for the development of the discipline.

JB: Such chairs might be housed in one of the many Mormon Studies centers that have sprung up across the nation, most of which consider literary studies as part of their purview. They could be similar to the Comparative Mormon Studies program at Utah Valley University, which sponsors the Eugene England Lecture Series, or the Mormon Studies program at the University of Virginia, which houses the Richard Lyman Bushman Chair.

You mention the Southern writers who "demanded their place in the canons of American literature." You also say that we have "manifestoed enough." But most of those manifestoes by William Mulder, Eugene England, you, Gideon Burton, and others were for insiders, not for the nation. If we as Mormon critics would take our own stand, what defenses, what specific bridges, would we construct that would persuade scholars of American literary studies that work by Mormon writers, other than The Book of Mormon, has an important place in the general tradition?

MA: I want to go back to the Southern regionalists who wrote *I'll Take My Stand*. I think that they remain the group that most successfully did what you and I think that Mormon writers and critics ought to do. They had a lot of things going for them. In the first place, several of them had already established themselves—or soon would establish themselves—as major writers and/or critics. I am thinking especially of Robert Penn Warren, who won three Pulitzer Prizes, and John Crowe Ransom, who was one of the founders of the New Criticism in the 1920s. People cared what they had to say about anything, so when they talked about Southern literature, people paid attention.

The other thing that they had going for them was a widespread movement in the United States that celebrated the different regions of the country. This was right when the expansion phase ended and the "Lower 48" states were all in place. The country was finished creating itself, so it was time for it to define its parts. Along with the older regions like New England and the South, there were new regions like the Mountain West and the Pacific Northwest, who were just starting to define themselves as distinctive cultures. The idea of a Southern region mapped nicely onto this movement, and it became the most successful of the regional literatures.

This is also the time that people started talking about a "Mormon Culture Region" in Utah and parts of Idaho, Arizona, Nevada, and California. Vardis Fisher's first six novels—all written between 1928 and 1935—were marketed as examples of the same movement in regional literature, and, between 1930 and 1950, about a hundred novels were published, mostly by Eastern presses, from writers in this region—figures like Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorenson, Jonreed Lauritzen, Richard Scowcroft, Jean Woodman, and on and on. Most of these novels dealt somehow with Mormons or Mormonism. But as Mormonism spread out, and was no longer primarily associated with a culture region, it became harder to determine what constituted "Mormon literature." This has made it harder to fit into the existing models.

But along with the dispersion of the Mormon people, there has been a dispersion of literature into multiple genres and categories.

Not long ago, I was in our local Barnes & Noble and noticed an entire genre category called "Teen Paranormal Romance"—a category of literature, by the way, that was made hugely popular by a Mormon author, Stephanie Meyer. Another Mormon author, Brandon Sanderson, has become equally prominent in fantasy, and Mormon writers like Anne Perry and Mette Ivie Harrison have achieved success in the mystery genre.

But it is hard to gather all of these genre threads in one argument about Mormonism, especially because, of the writer's I've named, only Harrison actually writes about Mormon characters living Mormon lives. Even if it is possible (as I've heard that it is) to tease out Mormon themes and arguments in Stephanie Meyer's work, critical articles on teenage vampire romance novels are not especially promising avenues for career advancement if one is an English professor. That said, a solid collection that looked at Mormon themes in hundreds of works of genre fiction by Latter-day Saint authors could probably find a publication outlet in the Mormon studies world.

And it would help if we had a breakthrough novel or two in something other than genre fiction. We don't need "Miltons and Shakespeares of our own," as Orson F. Whitney famously said (18). But we could use a few Saul Bellows and Flannery O'Conners of our own. Or an *All the King's Men* or *Tobacco Road* of our own. I think that it would be very possible for the raw material of Mormonism to support literature of this caliber, but it would not be popular with Latter-day Saints. There was a reason that Thomas Wolfe could not go home again, and I suspect that this is why some of our most talented writers have not yet attempted the kind of book that would break through to the larger literary world.

JB: I think it's true that most of the best Mormon writing is published in national venues, rather than Mormon or regional venues. While they might not be viewed by some as distinctly Mormon in their writing identity, similar to what you said of Mormon literary critics, this national recognition may be a step toward national recognition as a significant literary movement. I'm not sure we can

claim a breakthrough of the caliber of the novels you mention, but I think there has been significant national attention to writing by writers with Mormon heritage—especially in the areas of poetry, creative nonfiction, literary fiction, and some significant literary work in areas generally considered genre fiction—science fiction, fantasy, and young-adult fiction.

I surveyed my colleagues at BYU concerning Mormon writers currently publishing in their genres, then I looked at the publication records for the names that came up often, watching for nationally recognized academic or commercial presses, top-tier literary journals, and significant awards.

In poetry, I found three who clearly match the criteria. Lance Larsen has published five collections of poetry with solid academic presses; Kimberly Johnson, with four collections of her own poetry; and Timothy Liu, with eleven collections of poetry. These three have published in first-tier journals, including *New York Review of Books, London Times Literary Supplement, Poetry Magazine, Southern Review, Ploughshares, Georgia Review, Iowa Review, Paris Review, New Republic, American Poetry Review* (Larsen); *New Yorker, Slate, Yale Review, Kenyon Review* (Johnson); *Triquarterly, Tin House*, and *Columbia Poetry Review* (Liu). Larson has won a Pushcart Prize and a fellowship from the National Foundation for the Arts, and Johnson has won awards from the Mellon Foundation, Guggenheim Foundation, and the National Foundation for the Arts. She also has a poem in *Best American Poetry 2020*. Larsen's poetry explores some themes common in Mormon literature: often focusing on what it means to have a body, which fact he celebrates as he observes how we move from one muddled, startled, joyous state to the next. Johnson explores connections between aesthetics, form, and religion, mostly in the context of lyric poetry. In addition to her own work, she explores the devotional lyric in an anthology and a critical analysis: *Before the Door of God: An Anthology of the Devotional Lyric* (Yale University Press, 2013), which is co-authored with Jay Hopler, and *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Post-Reformation England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). Poetry Foundation writes that "Liu's poetry explores identity, violence, sexuality, and the power of witness."

Concerning fiction, three Mormon writers have won the Flannery O'Connor award, Darrell Spencer, Mary Clyde, and Paul Rawlings. Spencer has published five books, including a novel and four collections of short fiction, and has won the Drew Heinz Literature Prize. He often uses Mormon material in his stories, often doing through the eyes of a protagonist who is startled or bewildered by the encounter. Brian Evenson has published a dozen books of fiction which straddle the boundary between literary and genre fiction, as reflected by the various awards he has received, including the Shirley Jackson Award, the Bram Stoker Award, two awards from the American Library Association, an Edgar Award, two International Horror Guild Awards, three O. Henry Prizes, and an NEA fellowship. A linguistic wizard, his stories are boiled down Gothic, like a skeleton stripped of flesh, animated by something beyond flesh. Brady Udall has published a short story collection and two novels, both with Norton. His novel, *The Lonely Polygamist*, was a New York Times bestseller. He has published short work in *The Paris Review* and *Esquire*. His fiction is set in the arid West and overtly includes Mormon materials, viewing the culture with an ironic eye. Phyllis Barber has published nine books—two novels, two short story collections, three memoirs, and two books for young readers. Her novels, while also set in the West (both she and Spencer are members of the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame) are historical, exploring questions of obedience and will in the settlements along the Mormon corridor. Her memoirs are feminist and focus on feminine spirituality. Her work has been included in the *Best American Essays* and *Best American Travel Writing*. A handful of other novelists bear mention in terms of nationally published literary fiction: Tim Wirkus, with two novels that play along the edge between the fantastic and the spiritual; Ryan McIlvain, whose two novels scan Mormonism from a critical perspective; and Todd Peterson, who just had a book published with Counterpoint.

Patrick Madden is the author of three collections of personal essays and co-editor of a volume of essays which reflect or play against specific essays written by Montaigne—*After Montaigne: Contemporary Essayists Cover the Essays*. He has published in *Portland Magazine* (which Brian Doyle built into a home for spiritual autobiography),

Fourth Genre, The Normal School, The Iowa Review, Hotel Amerika, and *The Best American Spiritual Writing 2007*. He has received a Howard Foundation Fellowship and two Fulbright Fellowships, and is co-editor of the 21st Century Essays series at The Ohio State University Press, co-editor of the literary journal Fourth Genre, and vice president of the NonfictioNOW Conference. His writing is a marriage of Montaigne in his endless curiosity and ability to make the mundane significant through reflection, Hazlitt and Chesterton in his capriciousness and humor, and Francis Bacon in his logical approach to matters of science and human culture. Up and coming are Joey Franklin—two collections, Best American Essays notable essays, publications in Poets and Writers, *Gettysburg Review*, *The Norton Reader*, co-editor with Madden of *Fourth Genre*—and Lina Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas—two collections of essays, co-editor of the forthcoming anthology *The Great American Essay*, and publications in *The Bellingham Review, The Chicago Review, Fourth Genre, Brevity, Poets & Writers* and the *Sunday Rumpus*. In addition, Tara Westover's memoir was on several national bestseller lists, and Joanna Brooks' work has had broad distribution, including a memoir, *Book of Mormon Girl*; a monograph, *Mormonism and White Supremacy: American Religion and the Problem of Racial Innocence*; and a co-edited anthology—*Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*—the latter two both published by Oxford University Press. The final writer I'll mention in this short list, Walter Kirn, a member of the Church for a short time, has published a Best American Essay on his experience among the Mormons, and a collection of linked autobiographical short fiction, that gives his account of his teenage years after his family's conversion to the faith.

The best known writing by members of the Church is by science fiction and fantasy writers, many of whom write upmarket fiction (fiction which is a crossover for literary fiction), including Orson Scott Card and David Farland/Wolverton, who died this year. Many young adult writers also use literary techniques in their fiction including fantasy writers Shannon Hale (Newbery Honor award), Rosalyn Eaves, and others who write contemporary young adult fiction—Martine Leavitt (Canadian Governor's Prize), Carol Lynch Williams (40

books and numerous awards), Ann Dee Ellis, A.E. Cannon, and Matt Kirby. They generally follow the model created by Jane Austen, showing young women who must learn to use their heads; they often show their protagonists working their way through difficult circumstances that Austen might have imagined or observed.

However, as I said above, most of these writers write what may be classified as American literature, but more rarely as Mormon literature. They may be generally known to be members of the Church, but with some exceptions, they aren't known for Mormon materials in their work.

Several of them are no longer in the Church and have made conscious efforts to distance themselves from their religious roots. Still, all these writers could be the subjects of Mormon literary studies. For literary writers who overtly use Mormon materials we need to consider the Signature, By Common Consent, and Zarahemla publishers. Just counting those with several books we have Jack Harrell, Robert Hogdson Van Wagoner, Paul M. Edwards, Doug Thayer, Levi Peterson, Margaret Young, Steven Peck, Susan Elizabeth Howe, Alex Caldiero, Mette Ivie Harrison (who has four Mormon novels published with BCC Press as well as many with national publishers). I count myself among this group. Also notable are poets Carol Lynn Pearson, who has published with Cedar Fort Press, and Lisa Bickmore, who has significant national publications.

I believe I just have one more question, which came up earlier: What are Mormon narratives or themes that cut across publishing boundaries (Mormon market, national market, and literary press) that might be studied by American literature scholars? I'll take a stab at my own question first. Perhaps the most common theme is literature that engages with the concepts of frontier and wilderness. Vardis Fisher's *Children of God* charts the growth and westward pioneering movement of the Saints. Fisher also wrote about other frontier subjects—Lewis and Clark, the Hudson Bay Company, and the Donner Party expedition. Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* explores the tensions in the settlement of St. George, Utah, including their wrestle with both polygamy and the harsh environment. More modern writers have written either about pioneers or the wild

environment—including fiction writers such as Phyllis Barber (*The Desert Between Us*) and Dean Hughes (*Come to Zion* series, *Muddy*, and *River*), and creative nonfiction writers such as Terry Tempest Williams (*Refuge, Red, Erosion*, and many others) and George Handley (*Home Waters* and *The Hope of Nature*).

Another powerful subject through which Mormon writers connect to American literary themes is tension over cultural diversity. While Virginia Sorensen's books explore multiple subjects, her adult and children's fiction mainly focus on relationships between people of different cultural backgrounds; she explores this in *Where Nothing Is Long Ago, Kingdom Come, The Neighbors*, and *Plain Girl*. Books such as *The Morning and the Evening* and others consider tensions between mainstream and fringe members of the Church. Margaret Young, in her *Standing on the Promises* series, writes about race and religion. Gender relations, especially the status of women, is also a common Mormon literary theme with broader connections to American literature; these writers would include essayists, memoirists, and poets such as Lula Green Richards, Emmeline B. Wells, Lucinda Lee Dalton, Eliza R. Snow, Joanna Brooks, and Terry Tempest Williams.

I'll mention one more category, a broad one: works that might be classified as gothic, magical realism, and fantasy, which for many writers who have ties to the Church is a means for exploring the limits of perception, the fuzzy lines between rationality, sensation, and spirituality. This diverse grouping might include such writers as Brian Evanson, Tim Wirkus, Steven Peck, Orson Scott Card, Brandon Sanderson, David Wolverton, and many, many others. Obviously, some essential works speak about spirituality in realistic as opposed to metaphorical terms.

MA: It's interesting that almost everyone I know has at least one favorite writer who is some kind of Mormon, whether they know it or not. For mystery fans, it is usually Anne Perry. But for the younger people, it is either Brandon Sanderson or Stephanie Meyer. And for the more academically inclined, it is Terry Tempest Williams, Brian Evenson, or Neil LaBute. And, until recently, it was often Orson Scott Card. All of these writers have in fact incorporated some elements of

their Mormon background into their writings in both obvious and subtle ways. But at a certain point, just identifying Mormons who write stuff isn't going to get us all the way to the Promised Land. This very loose collection of different kinds of writers who happen to be Mormon is going to have to coalesce into a body of texts that deal tangibly with aspects of Mormon cultural or religious themes. There is a world of difference between, say, Flannery O'Connor and Tony Hillerman. Though both identified as Catholic, O'Connor wrote about essentially Catholic things—not just the fact of being Catholic or going to Church, but about original sin, grace, conversion, and redemption. The heavy stuff.

Where do we see this in Mormon literature? Orson Scott Card has done a lot with some of the most identifiable Mormon doctrines: temple work in *Speaker for the Dead*, for example, or modern revelation in the Alvin Maker saga. I think that there is much more to do there. And some of his work (I'm thinking of some of the early stuff like *Songmaster*) does a nice job of exploring the dual nature of community, which can be both nurturing and suffocating, often at the same time. My son tells me that Brandon Sanderson (with whom I am only glancingly familiar) explores ideas like apostasy and restoration in his novels.

In the more literary narratives, Terry Tempest Williams did a marvelous job in *Refuge* of exploring the religious nature of wilderness and of multi-generational families, both of which are important Mormon concepts. And she also looks a lot at ideas of agency and consequences in Leap and some of her later work. And I think that the end of *The Giant Joshua* is the best thing we have on the idea of Zion. And a lot of very good recent poetry takes up the Mormon idea of Heavenly Mother/Divine Feminine—Rachel Hunt Steenblick and Kathryn Knight Sontag are two that come to mind right away.

At the end of the day, great literature is going to have something to do with compelling ideas, and Mormonism has as many of these as any other belief system. We can point to some isolated works that do this very well, but we don't really have a coherent literary tradition. We can draw a pretty straight line from Augustine to Dante to G.K. Chesterton to Flannery O'Connor that encompasses a thousand

years of Catholic writers grappling with the same issues. In eight hundred years, I hope that the same will be said of Mormon literature.

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Moon Jar

Amy Lee Scott

My mother died when I was seven years old. I stifled the hurt, silenced it, and vowed never to speak of her again. I allowed her to disappear from my life as surely as her closet of clothes and jewelry my father later threw out without asking his seven kids if we wanted to save anything. We wouldn't have anyway. It was best to move on.

It must have been then that I decided I would not have children. Not if something like this could happen to me as a mother. Not if I could prevent a child from feeling all that pain.

As I grew the thought stuck. Why would anyone want to bear the burden of another's life when there was already so much to carry? I wanted the freedom to pack up my dented Honda Civic whenever I pleased—I was, in fact, proud that all my earthly belongings fit neatly in its compact trunk—and leave. I was not tethered to anyone or anything. I honed my life into a sheer cliff of independence and thought myself better for it.

There was also a deep and insatiable hurt pedaling around my head. To be rendered motherless three times before the age of 10—once through international adoption, again through my adopted mother's death, and finally through divorce (that third mother lasted

less than a year)—left me emotionally stunted, though I hid it well with my friendly demeanor and cultivated California chill.

Then I met a pale, ginger-haired man with the elegant hands of a pianist.

Even before we got married friends and acquaintances would look at us—me with hair as black and glossy as a raven's wing, and him with a crown of red curls—and gush, "You guys will make the most beautiful babies." It was a compliment, if misguided, like when others heard I was adopted and squealed, "I would *love* to adopt—I have always wanted a black baby," never mind that I was not black but Korean. They would beam Crest white strip smiles at me and wait, nodding with bright, I-totally-get-you eyes.

I never figured out what the right response should be to the sweet, biting elision of my race and origin. Is this what people thought interracial adoption was? An act as straightforward as shopping for a limited-edition doll? *Step right up, folks, to the baby sale! Buy one in every color! Collect all 10 and receive a prize!*

I married that ginger-haired man a year later, the trees shaggy with green while fairy lights glinted above us and the Potomac River slipped by like a shadow. And still, I did not want a child.

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Just 43 years earlier, before the Supreme Court ruling overturned laws that banned interracial marriage in its landmark 1976 Loving v. Virginia decision, our interracial marriage would have been illegal.[1] In fact, it was not terribly long ago when an "anti-Asian crusade" in

[1]While most anti-miscegenation laws were initially created to restrict marriage between whites and blacks, by the early twentieth century these laws were interpreted to include Asians and Indian Americans as "non-white." Many states, including California where I grew up, passed laws to specifically make marrying Asians illegal. As Dr. Hilary Lowe writes in Temple University's *Women In History* blog, anti-miscegenation laws "sought to keep white communities white, black communities white, and Asian communities nonexistent" by forbidding Asian women to immigrate to the United States, marry Asian men, and bear Asian children (per the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Expatriation Act of 1907).

California peaked when the state legislature voted to end Chinese immigration, mostly to quell the rising population of Chinese people and their offspring.

In 1880, John Miller, chairman of the Committee on the Chinese, vociferously voiced his opinion against marriage between whites and Chinese: "Were the Chinese to amalgamate at all with our people, [. . .] the result of that amalgamation would be a hybrid of the most despicable, a mongrel of the most detestable that has ever afflicted the earth."[2]

Interracial marriage was still listed as a provision in at least one state's constitution as recently as 2007. Alabama finally voted to remove Section 102 of its State Constitution, which declared that "the legislature shall never pass any law to authorise or legalise any marriage between any white person and a Negro or a descendant of a Negro." The ballot referendum was supported by 59% of voters, while 41% favored keeping it. By removing Section 102, Alabama became the last state to formally legalize interracial marriage.

That same year I met my future husband in Virginia, a commonwealth that once threatened to exile whites who married outside their race. In 1691, exile was a death sentence but such was preferable to an "abominable mixture" of races that might result in "spurious [children]."

When I was younger, I often read things like this and excused the blatant racism as being a product of its time. After all, *legal* racism was a thing of the United States' past. Even though I understood that racist feelings and hateful discriminatory acts still persisted, I harbored enough naiveté in my youth to think that we as a country had moved slightly past Colonial-era, or even Civil Rights-era, racism.

But how does one explain Rodney King, the notorious trial, and resulting riots that defined my Los Angeles childhood? Or Michael Brown, whose fatal shooting flared nationwide protests, including in Detroit, a city I had grown to love as a newlywed when we moved to

[2]Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of California, 1878–79 (Sacramento, State Office, 1880), 1: 632; quoted in Osumi, "Asians and California's Anti-Miscegenation Laws," 5.

Dearborn Heights, a neighboring suburb founded in the uncanny shape of a racial gerrymander.[3] Charlottesville. Executive Order 13769. Or my Sunday School teacher, who once told a high school class of white kids and me, the lone Korean, that he was very sorry but he just did not see a way for interracial marriages to succeed.

I do not remember the lesson topic but I do remember the near physical sense of being thrown against a wall—the lung-crushing, spine-breaking pain of it—as I heard the words come out of his mouth. Class ended as it always did with students packing up and chattering while I remained tethered to my chair without air to breathe.

If a Racist Comment Ranking System existed, his words would certainly fall on the most innocuous side of the spectrum. So many have heard worse—far, far worse—have endured unspeakable things.[4] I was already fifteen, three years shy of adulthood, when I first began to notice the microaggressions that popped up on TV shows I watched, magazines I read, and news I heard. While hardly any of the "bad racism" seemed directed at Asians, I noticed the stark absence of

[3]Dearborn Heights incorporated in 1960. Inkster, a predominantly black community that lost some of its land in the process, filed a lawsuit claiming such incorporation created racial gerrymandering. In Taylor v. Township of Dearborn (1963), the Michigan Supreme Court eventually dismissed the lawsuit: "On the present record it may not be said with any degree of assurance that the incorporation of Dearborn Heights will erect or permit a racial 'wall.'"

[4]For instance, in 1967, four years after the Taylor v. Township of Dearborn decision, when Detroit combusted into one of the deadliest race riots in U.S. history. By the end of the five days of destruction, 43 people were dead. 14 of the 33 black people killed were shot by police officers. Nine were shot by National Guardsmen, one of whom shot Albert Robinson, then bayoneted him for good measure. The Guardsmen reportedly said, "That feel good? You dead yet?" after Robinson pleaded for help. Four-year-old Tanya Blanding was killed after Guardsmen in a tank used the armored vehicle's machine gun to fire into her apartment building, mistaking her peeking through the window for a black sniper. On top of the deaths, 1,189 people were injured; 7,231 were arrested; and 2,000 buildings were destroyed.

people like me anywhere in popular culture. It was as if we did not even exist, which somehow seemed worse.

By the time I entered high school the only characters of East-Asian descent I could remember seeing in the media at all were Mickey Rooney's obscene yellow face in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Bruce Lee kicking across movie posters in my brother's room, and scrappy Data with his cool calculator watch in *The Goonies*.

There was also *Mulan*, which came out in 1998, when I was in eighth grade and could not really be bothered with Disney anymore. I remembered her again when I was teaching at a tiny liberal arts school deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It was a town of "6,002 Happy Citizens and 3 Old Grouches," purveyor of a Dollar Tree and a single movie theater. My husband and I went to see a movie and the little girl behind the counter gaped at me then scuttled behind her mother. Her mother smiled apologetically, "No offense, you just remind her of Mulan."

I laughed it off. But it sobered me. I was likely one of the only Asian women this girl had seen in real life, in the United States, in 2010. Maybe she was star struck by my Mulan-ness, but maybe she was also afraid, just a little, because I was different, and could perhaps at any time chop off my hair, befriend a tiny dragon, and take down the leader of the Hun army on a palace rooftop. So she hid behind her mother while I laughed and took my bag of popcorn into the theater.

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I was raised in a white, church-going family where I was taught that police officers, like teachers and other authority figures, were safe. They would help me if I was in trouble. I did not need to, nor did I ever have any cause to, fear them.

As a child, it did not occur to me that not everyone felt this way. That skin color mattered. It did not occur to me that I—a Korean adoptee—was anything different from my white siblings and friends until small, frightening things happened. A child laughing at me while pulling his eyelids up into a grotesque slant. Another trying to karate chop me while jeering, "Bring it, Ninja!" There were other

incidents, less provocative, but strange enough to put me on edge. Comments like, "So what kind of Oriental are you?" Or, "Can I copy your math homework—I mean, you're all *so* good at math." Or, "Where are you from—like *from*-from?" I was not a rug, quite dismal at math, and called the exotic land of suburban Los Angeles home so I would just shrug the questions away and mumble awkwardly.

I was somehow different but could not relate to the foreignness others saw in me. Instead, I ate chicken pot pies like my siblings, played street hockey with my neighbors, and obsessed over the same white teen idols my friends loved. Close friends would inevitably say to me in a confiding tone, "Honestly, I don't even see you as Asian anymore," deftly wiping out a core part of my existence with the most well-meaning words. It did not help that I did not see myself as Asian, much less Korean.

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I was adopted in 1984 at the peak of the Korean adoption frenzy. That year, 5,348 children were sent to live with (largely) white, middle class families in staid places like Ohio and Minnesota. Since the Korean War, 200,000 Korean children have been placed in homes abroad. Over half of these children went to America. Many Koreans now consider this mass "child exportation" as an egregious humiliation, especially as their country grew wealthy in the decades after the Korean War.

Once, when my husband was interviewing for a job with a Korean university, he mentioned that I was adopted. The interviewer stopped his line of questioning and looked down at his hands. "That was a great national shame," he said.

My husband never heard back from that university, so we ended up in Michigan, in a tiny house ten minutes away from the Detroit Metro Airport, where I had flown through as a baby en route from Korea to Ohio. One of his new colleagues had also adopted a boy from Korea in the 80s. She used to meet families at DTW to help greet their Korean children. She thought it was possible that she had been one of the greeters when I arrived on a crisp October afternoon.

I like to think that she was there. That she delighted in watching the creation of new families there in the cavernous terminal.

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A year after I got married, I found and visited my orphanage in Korea. There I held snuggly babies waiting to be sent on their own planes to distant lands to another pair of arms who would likely know very little about their homeland. I played tag with a small herd of toddler boys—and all of them were boys because, as the Korean social worker told me, Westerners just want baby girls—and imagined what their futures held.

One of the boys, clearly the alpha of the pack, strutted and preened before us covered from head to toe in the stickers we brought. The social worker told me that each child could have a sponsor and this boy received the most donor money out of all of them. That a three-year-old child was aware of the transactional nature of his existence gutted me. It was likely that he and most of the boys giggling around me would never be adopted. There was not much demand for preschool aged kids or older. Instead, he would probably age out of the only home he knew and be released into the general public with a meager annual stipend and start living on his own.

Eight years after I visited my orphanage my son turned three. I thought about his Korean counterpart a lot that year. I could see his reflection in every single thing my son did, every word he uttered. When my son leaped and swaggered and hammed it up he never once thought of it as a vital performance. He had the freedom to have a tantrum, even when we had company over. Donor money was not at stake.

I wonder what happened to the Korean boy. Did he find another home with another mother to love him? Did he silence his native tongue in favor of a Germanic one with ridiculous silent letters and indecipherable connotations? Did he, like me, get adopted and find himself always feeling on the outskirts of his life because straddling two cultural hemispheres is nearly impossible with no one to show you how?

Or did he remain in the custody of the orphanage, growing into a gangly eleven-year-old, playing tag with the toddlers coming up behind him, wondering what would become of them, all of them?

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It took five years of being married to a good man before I decided I would like to try and have a child. With him I saw a future where a child would be beloved and not forsaken like I had been so many times. With his help I thought I could bear the burden of love, perhaps even trust it.

We researched international adoption but could not afford it without taking out a hefty loan. Some countries also require adopting parents to live in the child's country for up to 12 weeks. While we had flexible schedules, we were young academics saddled with student loans and one beater car to our name. It was not the right time to adopt; arguably, it was not the right time to have a child at all. But we had a steady paycheck and excellent health care. We would somehow manage—if we did not have to go further in debt to have a child.

I thought about the women I knew who wanted children desperately but could not. My American mother, for one. While I have not experienced infertility, I have felt that whiplash of betrayal when my first pregnancy was diagnosed as a blighted ovum and refused to quit my body without medical intervention. Talking with women who have not been able to carry much wanted children is both galvanizing and heartbreaking. The toll—physical, emotional, and financial—is unspeakable.

When I got pregnant for the second time I accepted it as the gift it was.

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My son is now four and has a younger sister with the most improbable ginger hair. She is admired wherever we go. Perfect strangers feel compelled to run their fingers through her auburn hair. For that

brief moment they are anchored in the delightful contradiction of an impossible possibility: a redheaded Asian.

Before she was born, my husband and I debated the probability that his signature red curls would get passed down. The likelihood seemed so null it became a running joke. And then she was born. I scoured the internet for examples of Asians with naturally red hair. They exist in pockets of Tibet and Mongolia. It is said that Ghengis Khan was a redhead.

As an international adoptee with a closed adoption I had no access to my family tree, until the advent of online DNA testing. Six years ago I submitted a vile of saliva and learned that 30% of my DNA was Japanese. It seemed to explain why everyone, including myself, thought I did not look "full" Korean. I even had 0.2% "Southern European." I joked that this was why my son came out so white—that tiny bit of European DNA.

It did not occur to me that my DNA could change. But with more and more people participating in sites like *23andMe*, the data pool grew and made DNA analysis more accurate. When I checked my ethnic breakdown a few months ago I was shocked that my Japanese DNA—which I had come to believe was an intrinsic part of excavating my erased heritage—had essentially disappeared. I was now 97.1% Korean and 0.6% Japanese. The 0.2% Southern European transformed into 0.3% Chinese, with a significant lean towards Mongolian.

Even with science my genetics betrayed me. With a flick of a screen, my son's seemingly innate love of Japanese food could now be explained by chance and environment, rather than as an unconscious nod to his now nonexistent Japanese blood. My inconclusive face is now fully Korean. My ginger daughter is an anomaly, perhaps a very distant relative of Ghengis Khan, who may or may not have been a redhead. I did not expect the shift in simple percentages to create such a groundswell beneath my own story.

The tidy narrative I had cobbled together to make sense of my heritage's swirling mystery evaporated. In its place is a wholly different story that I have yet to build.

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While pregnant with my son I worried about his race. I was biologically Korean but identified as white suburban American. My husband was Kentucky bluegrass white. My child would technically be half Korean but raised ostensibly white. What would be lost in this? All the things I did not know about my Korean mother, her country, her culture—that black hole of knowledge would be my son's cultural inheritance.

After operating as a foreign body in a white world for so long it surprises me that my children can pass as white. Truthfully, it bothers me that they carry so little of my Asian physicality. It seems like yet another erasure, one that gives me a conflicted feeling of safety. As visually white children they will experience the world in a different way than me. Though, perhaps, they will feel the divide in a more concrete way. While I never feel at home anywhere, a liminal person untethered to any roots, they will quite literally function in a space between races. They are the "spurious children," the "detestable mongrels" our forefathers feared when they legally forbade interracial marriage.

While my kids have the pale skin of their father, it tans easily like mine. They have his golden-brown eyes and an ever so slight almond shape thanks to me. But when they were bald newborns, still crinkly and unused to the world, they looked nothing like my husband. Instead, they looked exactly like the photo of me as a baby lying on a blanket on an airport floor. A few other Korean babies lay next to me. We all have our identity numbers pinned to our rompers and wait for the flight that will take us to our new American families across an ocean. Many of us will not return to our homeland until we are grown, if at all.

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After decades of not wanting to be a mother, the striking rightness of becoming a mother was unexpected. I think about the little boys I left at my orphanage more than ever, and the women who

carried each one curled tight within their bodies for nearly a year, then labored—for what other word can summarize the exquisite cacophony of such work—for hours, maybe even days, before their bodies gave way to an impossible truth: a baby.

What wild thoughts stampeded through each woman's mind? What did my mother think as she lay spent after giving birth to me? Surely I cried, the sound like a mewing kitten, tugging and tugging. When I cradled each of my newborns I could not stop staring at their perfect, sleepy moon faces. I had never felt such warmth, their downy skin like silk beneath my fingers. Was it the same for her? Did she feel a wash of maternal instinct kick in as she breastfed me for two days (so my adoption file claims)? Or did she numb it out, knowing our fate, unable to bear the thought of it?

It is something to let go of a dear thing.

It is entirely another to hold tight.

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Is it enough to know that I made one woman a mother? I wonder if she—my mother, a stranger I would not recognize if we passed on the street—remembers the weight of me in her arms. I look at the photos of me and each of my babies the day I met them. I hardly recognize the woman holding each child with a grace I have never experienced otherwise. The photos seem from another time, ethereal. I look at them and wonder: How did my mother do it?

I cannot fathom a single iteration of my life where I would willingly sign away my maternal rights and let another family raise my children. I have the luxury of stability, which my unmarried, barely educated Korean mother lacked. As I have become a mother, I am beginning to learn how to mother myself, and the faceless woman who brought me to life. The anger and hurt I felt for so long has dimmed. Now I can see my mother with such clarity.

She stands before me, no more than 20, a wisp of a thing. Coarse black hair woven into a heavy rope down her back. Small hands resting on her giant belly. She can feel me swimming around and each lap pulls her heart so hard she thinks she might die. She does

not know what to do, alone in a strange city, no family around to bear witness to her shame.

If I were her mother, I would gather this frightened girl in my arms and never let go. She deserves it; we all do. Instead, she drifts away, becoming an echo of the life I might have lived. She, along with the boy from the orphanage, follow me around like shadows, urging me to love my children like we had all once wished to be loved, to treasure my son and daughter carefully and fully.

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During Korea's Joseon Dynasty, in a period bookended by two invasions (Japan in 1592 and Manchuria in 1636), large white porcelain jars became in vogue. Due to their voluminous globe shape, moon jars required patience and masterful skill to create. Very few would have survived the kiln and those that did were prized by Korea's elite.

Photographer Koo Bohnchang first saw an image of a moon jar while flipping through a magazine in the late 1980s. Its beauty stayed with him and became the inspiration for his book *Vessels for the Heart*. Koo photographed moon jars so that they truly resembled moons shining out from the darkness of space. To him, "the rough yet soft textures" of the milky white porcelain reminded him of human skin. "I took their photos as if they were portraits of a human being."

Like the moon in many cultures, moon jars were associated with fertility. Placental jars of the Joseon period, also made from prized white porcelain, were made as a set, one jar nestled within another as a baby nestles within its mother, and were reserved for burying the placenta of a prince or princess. Thought to contain the life force of the baby, a royal baby's placenta was highly regarded and thus enshrined with its umbilical cord and buried to guarantee the baby's health.

To create a moon jar, potters formed two hemispherical halves that were joined together by a seam. The warping that occurred on the wheel gave the jars an asymmetrical shape that, paired with the visible seam, was celebrated for its natural imperfection. Ik-Joong Kang sees beauty in the formation of moon jars. By connecting two

hemispheres by a center seam, a form emerges "like a human being, filled with air and spirit . . . its imperfections admirable." In his master work, *1392 Moon Jars (Wind)*, Kang installed one thousand five-inch moon jars as twenty concentric circles. If you speak across the moon jars, your voice is amplified by the sea of empty jars, creating a "tension between wholeness and separation."

The moon jar's elegant form came to represent a distinct new cultural Korean voice, one that emerged despite its ragged colonized history. I can't help but to read my story, which resides in the liminal space between so many things, into that of the moon jar. Without knowledge of my Korean genealogy, I forge a new one cobbled from the bits and pieces I bump into. This practice is not unlike contemporary artist Yeesookyoung's process of using kintsugi, a Japanese method for repairing broken pottery, to fuse discarded fragments that didn't survive the kiln together with epoxy and gold leaf to create a new kind of moon jar. She deftly takes what is broken and translates it into new vessels made stronger by their reinforced seams, cracks[5] now sparkling with gold.

Discussing the role of vulnerability in her *Translated Vases* series, Yeesookyoung says:

> I am attracted to failed, broken or ephemeral things. [. . .] It is not about fixing or mending, but about celebrating the vulnerability of the object and ultimately myself. This broken state allows me to explore new narratives. [. . .] A broken ceramic fragment is a starting point. [. . .] The destruction of the original invites new possibilities. [. . .] I translate the pieces to form an infinite proliferation which is no longer fragile.

Artist Lee Ufan sees things similarly and categorizes the essence of Korean pottery by its flaws, stating that it "doesn't try to reach perfection—instead, it's trying to achieve imperfection. It reflects life itself."

[5]According to Yeesookyoung, the Korean word geum means both "crack" and "gold."

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I remember one sleepless night soon after my son was born. He would not stop crying. He screeched and howled while I swaddled him and clutched him to my heart. He wailed on. I held him closer and said, almost by rote, that I loved him, as though I could conjure this love with mere words like a spell. *I love you,* I said and kissed his cheek. I barely knew him.

He settled in my arms and his body soon weighted with sleep, his mouth in a tiny "o" breathing and full of life. *I love you*, I said again because suddenly I did. Something surged within me, like the quickening I felt when I first felt him kick in my womb. It was such a sudden, unbidden emotion. I told my boy that I was glad he was here and that he was mine to raise and love, though I was weak and doubting, just barely held together by my seams.

Perhaps it is because I am these things that my boy came to me, ready to witness my humanity with all its many failings. Perhaps this is why the man I love wept when he saw our boy, first as some hair and then a tiny face, wet and purple and animal. We were two hemispheres without a world before we found each other.

It is something to love another so deeply, so imperfectly, that the effort creates a brand new moon.

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Long After Horace

What god can the people call as the Empire totters . . .
—Horace, trans. Rosanna Warren

Heaven knows—as the weeks accrete,
    Cancer-like, the irate cells of their days—we spend
Half our time on the internet,
    Skimming lists of the first symptoms of maladies,

Begging Google to find us feeds
    Blessed with accurate facts, snorting at random memes,
Same as always. We have a clear
    Motto: Best of all fates not to be bored. We aren't.

Still, and oftener than we'd like,
    Night arrives and our nerves jerk us awake. We scroll,
Calibrating our fears. We call
    Information a flood, frame as a whirlwind news

Cycling past in its fast-paced clips,
    Pluck some comfort from terms tying us back to earth—
There where dangers are agentless,
    Not like those we're afraid nobody made but us.

Yes, we've scuttled the quaint accounts,
    Unbelievable now—thinking the world could end
Wracked by earthquakes, tornados, droughts,
    All the ancient machines. Innocence had its charms.

Nowadays we imagine cracked
    Despots punching in codes, flanked by their renegade
Science-goons who've designed a germ,
    Gene, or cyborg with dream circuits to sort us out.

Worse yet, knowing the odds, we're still
    Synthesizing the best hormones to boost troops' bone
Strength, still titrating acids most
    Useful for the prolonged eating away of hope—

Perfect tools for the torture squads
    Knocking, briskly, on doors. Once we'd have prayed to gods,
Bid them open the cloud-locked skies.
    Now we're writing concerned letters to men with ties.

–Stephen Kampa

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